

Middlelost II
Autumn 2019

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Middlelost 1.2 Autumn 2019

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**Justlost
Editors' Reflections**

The pattern
itself might
not die:

a state of
tessellated
basic shapes [...]

– Aaron Vansteinberg, *The Fabric*

Reading the submissions for this second installment of MiddleLost, I felt that some inarticulable perspective shook out, some sense in which this work worked together. I can read them all, if not each one eco-poetical, then as gesturing at or falling out of a shared anxiety.

Systems that bloat will show their seams. The pattern—the system—has no other job than “not [to] die.” The more robust that pattern is in managing natural selection-like processes, the more intractably it might not die. A particularly successful pattern will continue not to die until its environment or substrate can no longer support it.

Head—Hands—Heart—Health (Scott C. Smith) wants us to think about endings, about the way a moment looks patterned from outside of history. The poem operates on the conceit of Mayan calendrical reckoning and a poetics balanced between musicality and analogical sense-making. Its satisfaction of numerological concerns and encyclopedic deployment of person and place names gesture at ending, or at least completion/totality. We are invited here to understand opposition not as cancellation but as a way of establishing, demarcating, or stretching nonetheless unified

conceptual spaces: the title covers the body under the uniting principle of alliteration; the stanzas tend to oscillate between distant places or ideal antitheses joined by phonology or meaning. Threaded throughout comes the sense that all is patterned, that sound and sense are planned and plan to resonate, that total/plenary contrasts are the measure by which we infer pattern.

So we might say some apocalyptic anxiety sits in the rafters and that we doubt the chances of renewal given certain patterns' resilience.

In the builded place, the island
set thick with masonry, brick,
concrete steel and asphalt, crowded
with harsh density alive with
buzzing movement. This building
is called the Plaza, this the Dakota.
The name of that building, she
said, is The Ugliest Building
in Manhattan.

– Mark Scroggins, *Dead End*

Basic shapes. These pieces, from a collection called “Zion Offramp,” invite a reading in the terms the Books of Moses set forth. Formulae like “builded place” throughout the poem invoke the King James translation, its texture, its elemental lexicon. Such diction wants to introduce a contrast, namely between that which has been developed or erected by artifice

and that which is “already there,” “natural,” or “pristine.” Yet here the “island,” the elemental substrate, is not one of grass or sand or forest primeval, but one of “concrete steel and asphalt.” It is “crowded.”

A return to culture-building, the establishment of tribe/arena/monolith. If we can return, we return with a difference: the raw materials are no longer “raw,” no longer atomic. What has come before—Modernist fractionation and self-reflection, post-modern irony and nihilism—populates our environment. Humanity has already harnessed mechanism and material: “the way things work” is not cleanly separable from “things people have made.” Here, then, is a poetics that demands we orient ourselves within a pre-masticated world, that we adopt a more nuanced view toward contrasts like natural/artificial, resource/waste, mechanism/culture.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

– Genesis 28:18

In such a state, what can we call “environment”? How do we work with material once-worked? What are our stones, and how do we set up pillars?

Gail Goers’s *OKC Poems* offer one way to cut these questions. The poems apparently rely on a collage process. We can compare “found poetry” forms like cento and blackout, but we might also think of Burroughsian cut-up text. Each of

these processes implies a different sort of contract: the blackout poem honors chronology (i.e., words/letters/phrases from the original are understood to preserve their order in the processed text); the cento, the integrity of the poetic line. The cut-up honors something like a phrase: a long-ish sequence of words which occur consecutively in text (crucially, it does not honor syntax).

The source text here—presumably the autobiographical content, self-descriptions, and other detritus of online dating profiles—is already hypertextual, even non-ergodic. It consists in multiple sections, each one either free text or closed vocabulary, which can be traversed without regard to order or arrangement. In this sense, selecting contiguous textual sequences without rigid regard for syntax constitutes a kind of cut-up; yet, because the source is already fractured, the cut-up is minimally invasive.

And if we accept (as Burroughs might enjoin us to) that cut-up constitutes something between divination and revelation, a way of interrogating the text for subtle/subliminal/subversive content by forcing it to form new sentences—if we can say this, then we can observe here that, when the source text already shows its seams, processing the text does little more than cut *away* certain rhetorical forms, rather than cutting *up* for new meaning. In this sense, these poems comprise a kind of pillar or stele: they reduce what was chaotic to something intelligible in human terms. The cut-up is blind; these poems demand viewpoint. Something is lost in the process—after all, it is easily to read these poems and reduce the writers of these dating profiles to afflicted troglodytes, insufferable pedants, lonely

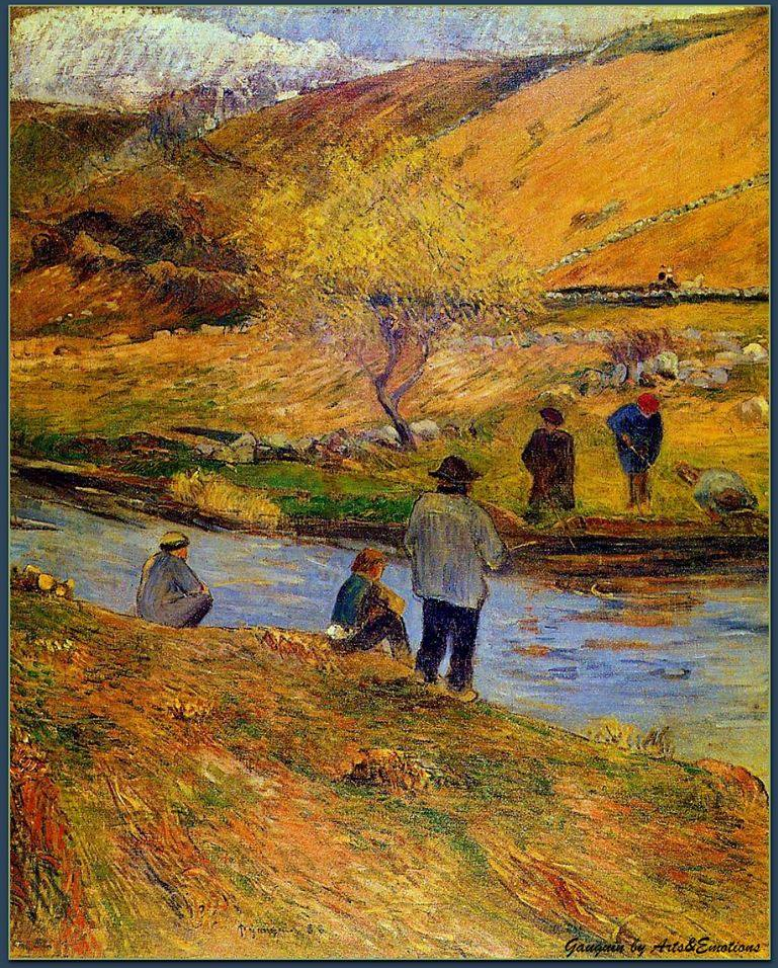
phantasms—yet the poems insist on forging order, on organizing the chaos, on conjuring vital narrative, albeit by necessity incomplete.

When one has a smart phone, it is nearly impossible to avoid a shift in reading habits. One's textual diet comes to consist of snippets, such as one finds on a dating profile, except spanning domains. We ingest short news gestures. We scan the titles of articles, perhaps dipping in to one or two. We follow links; we graze on information. Yet we crave depth and seek relatedness. As such, Jackson Safford's *Things I Don't Know* treads similar ground but walks in different boots. It operates on classically lyric principles, rather than procedural ones; it turns on controlled, intentional repetitions rather than aleatory; it internalizes its own humor, irony, and shuddering desolation, rather than taking notes on them.

It is not my place here to scold, to weigh in on whether the behavioral/social shifts enabled by tech and enforced by economy are tantamount to a neurotoxin, to bewail the death of relationships. Instead, an observation through the lens of poetics. Our informational climate is inhospitable. It is a desert: much matter abounds, little of it edible. As a result, there is chaos around the elements, the fundamentals: we don't know what facts are. We doubt our information (and with good reason). I am tempted to relate that chaos to the post-modern, to nihilism, to the sense that anything can work if you say it right. What rhetoric's always done when social conditions can make it stick.

In a creation text, after primal chaos, human existence is grounded in the primordial elements. So, if the post-modern cleared a space informationally/culturally, and low-value informational units are our “elements,” we might try to see our interface with the infosphere as resembling the interaction between mythic primordial beings and their environments. Learning what to shun and what to build from. And so I am further tempted to say that, when we tribe up, when we attempt to control our own and others’ language, and when we ideologize—that is, when we create narrative—we are doing the work of seeing thought/language as elemental, of putting up pillars. The work of not relying on what’s there to be solid for us, of instead establishing some arena in which relation and understanding again become possible. And some number of pillars will crumble under the cataclysmic sky.

Cory Massaro
August 2019



In essays on Symbolism written and published between 1902-1912, the Russian poet Andrei Bely attempts to resolve “the basic contradictions of the human consciousness”¹ that express themselves in a series of binary tensions: between consciousness and feeling, between contemplation and will, between individual and society, between science and religion, and between morality and beauty.² A signature move made in relation to this is that thought that human beings bring *form* to *content*, where the latter is something like “objective reality,” and, although Bely does not make this point, since we are capable of imagining things, this might have to include mental, imagined objects as well — things then to which we bring shape.

For Bely this meant knowledge was necessarily mediated, human shaped, and form and formal experiment a search for useful measure — useful shapes, patterns, durations, caesuras — schemas, scaffolds and page. Bely shared a trust in the creaturely with Rilke and, in the end, Celan, but we know that the exploration of form in the 20th and 21st century has also led away from the creaturely specific towards the artificial, the abstract, the conceptual and the post-human. Through all this, a key question remains, which is whether the body as such, and the sense world as its larger initial locus, ought to be understood as *necessary content* — that is, does our embodied creatureliness require an accounting, and is

¹ As cited in J.D. Elsworth, *Andre Bely: A Critical Study of the Novels*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 10; the passage cited is from Bely’s 1910 essay, “The Crisis of Consciousness and Henrik Ibsen.”

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

usefulness, in the end contingent on some relation to the body.³ Is the hope of finding some other mode of being what Spengler called “Faustian?” Easy to critique when we think Goethe’s mad magician fascinated by infinity but harder to admit in relation to our own utopian hopes, whether these are phrased in the idea that human difference disappears in some cultural One, in the infinite artificial of technology, or in a fascination with infinity’s Romantic double, the apophatic dark.

If indeed, we bring *form* to the content of the world, and if it is the case that in doing this we are forever translating from the topos of the imagination to the topos of the sensuous, from thought to page and back, it might be better to think the work we do as a form of suture, a scarring, rather than to imagine this as the imprint of that. Surely we might put away the Neo-Platonic at this point, which was only ever a way of saying there was, after all, an ultimate concern — that we keep this in sight. We are a long way from trying to make sense of the adventitious contrast between the fixed heavens and the changing day.

³ My use of creatureliness owes a debt to Eric Santner’s work on Rilke and Benjamin [Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Folks interested in this might look as well at Barnaba Maj, “Allegory, Metonymy and Creatureliness: Walter Benjamin and the Religious Roots of Modern Art” in *The Early Frankfurt School and Religion* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005) and Sigrid Weigel, *Walter Benjamin: Images, the Creaturely, and the Holy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Reading and writing as a mode of stitching — the production of a seam — not unlike the world of laying rocks out along a cleared field, or what a snail does by spitting out the silica that becomes its shell. Live word like the spidery fingered lines of Duncan’s late poetry — the poetry he wrote when he knew he’d die. When it was no longer possible to forget the way the body is part of the *form* we bring to content, however it blurs, however soft and forgiving our lips, even as I am able to feel you from across the room or, if I am honest, sometimes from hundreds of miles away.

In a recent conversation, the Dalai Lama made the, for me, startling and satisfying remark that he had begun to conclude that mind never occurred without body. Even in tantric models of death, where the “clear light consciousness” dawns, at last separate from any relationship with the no longer organically viable matter of the body, it rides upon a subtle wind, that tiniest comma, and then rises in the new shape of a bardo being — in a *between* that is already world. No not being a thing; no not bearing form, and thus never just *experiment* but contingent, and no freedom that is not bound.

David Need
September 2019



Flowers in the Night



Mark Scroggins

I began writing the sections of “Zion Offramp” four years ago. I wanted to try my hand at a modular long poem, yet something less formally constrained than the seven-line “microliths” of *Torture Garden: Naked City Pastorelles* or the ten-line stanzas of the title poem of *Pressure Dressing*. The 50-75-line span these sections fell into—with a variety of internal lineations and stanza shapes—has become perhaps too comfortable over the course of the first fifty-odd sections. I suspect I will break into longer or shorter forms in the sections to come.

The poem began life under the ridiculously ponderous and pretentious title “Capital,” which has the virtue at least of naming some of the physical, social, and spiritual stresses which the lines attempt to register. “Zion Offramp,” however, appeals to me as an emblem of how the poem charts a never-ending personal and collective journey: are we approaching or have we missed the offramp? does it lead towards or away from the Oz-like “Zion,” which is meant to evoke both St. John’s jewelled city and the spiritual homeland of the deepest, most dislocated dub music? Obviously, when I write “we” I mean “I”—but in some ways the poem is an exploration precisely of the pronominal, the weight of “I,” “we,” “you,” and all those third persons.

Editors have been extraordinarily generous to this work. Previous sections have appeared in *Marsh Hawk Review*, *X-Peri*, *Stride*, *Lute & Drum*, *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, *Notre Dame Review*, and *Rascal*.

46. *Dead End*

In the builded place, the island
set thick with masonry, brick,
concrete steel and asphalt, crowded
with harsh density alive with
buzzing movement. This building
is called the Plaza, this the Dakota.
The name of that building, she
said, is The Ugliest Building
in Manhattan. Maybe it has
no name. Its only saving grace,
she said, is that when there's fog
and rain, it's completely invisible.

The lights of the bridge a necklace
strung between the heights
 and the Palisades, improbable
vertiginous distance. Shouldered in
 among the semis and SUVs
at twilight, we see the island
 curve off on one hand
a dove-grey Xanadu
 set with blinking popping
and steady jewels.

Has it worked, after all these years
of planning and calculating, have
we stopped fearing and trembling?
I cross these bridges now
without a second thought
that once had me holding
my breath, hands sweating
on the steering wheel.

After all these years, nothing
won, hardly or otherwise, nothing
to be brought out as the hard-
won prize, no grand *summa*
or synthesis, nothing really
to say. Remarkably light
cargo at the end of a three-
decades' voyage.

*My name, they say, is Dawn. Or maybe
Don. I need a dollar or two. My truck's
over there, with my granddaughter
and significant other. We're out
of gas. I'm fifty-three. Never used, never
hustled. Fifty-three shows only*
in the close-cropped white hair. No lines,
no cracks. intricate and small, closely

worked; inked lines just
visible beneath glazes
of color; paint melted
to enamel; curves

of ivory; white
cameo on powder-
blue bisque—fascination
of the small, attraction
of the miniature gesture,
hand twitching the brush
an exquisite fraction, hatched
lines shading a lifetime's
expression in a quarter-inch
of paper

Credo:

These words. Martians gave me
these words. I heard these words
on the radio. The ouija board picked
them out for me. A subsonic transmission
from Ghost Factory Records,
from the Order of Monuments

Company. These words are air.

Vibration. Dark fluid dried on
paper. Ones and zeroes, sparking
pixels. No music at all.

No flesh, asomatic words.

A damsel with a dulcimer
gave me these words. I found
these words in the fields
and only wrote them down.

They followed me home, honest,
and I fed them table scraps.

47.

*Once upon a time, we tell
the child, you weren't allowed
to send pictures of naked people
through the mail. You weren't allowed
to print stories about people
having sex with other people, or make
movies where people took their clothes
off. The child believes us, as she believes
whatever we say. Things, we tell her,
are so much better now.*

Then we came adrift on the lake, might
have been a pond, body of water
moving so slowly it was like oceanic
dub, echoes up from some Mariana
Trench. It was overdubbing, time
to lay down a autumnal rasp
of congas, swirling thermal
from some keyboard patch, double

the bassline for a soupier
thicker sound. Adrift, no particular
direction under a directionless
sky. I thought *full-fleshed torsos*,
could only draw stick figures, thought
Turner seascapes, could only color
little rectilinear patches, magic
marker specials. There is a proportion,
law, harmony, that regulates the distance
from the chin to the eyebrows, nipple
to navel to pubis, what your fingers
touch when you let your arm fall
to your side. Antinomian drift, laws
and proportions lost. The weight, it turns out,
is history. That's what's making your back
hurt, even first thing in the morning.
It's history blunts your pencil lead,
misplaces the car keys, puts the wrong
foot in the right shoe. There were swans
on the lake, big fiberglass ones with
paddles and pedals to drive them.

If you pedalled hard enough, you'd reach Avalon, though no guarantee the king's body wouldn't slip off and slide under along the way.

They were busy overdubbing those last tracks, cowbells here organ there—the tracks were already laid down—no changing that, no reconsidering the time signature or key or final destination, though we could still decide whether to come to a stop or trickle out in a long slow fade.

The lack of spontaneity never bothered you, I know, far happier with a full score than a set of scribbled charts—*some kind of bridge here? consider a key change? maybe a short solo?*—a full script for the interview rather than freewheeling improv, timed and choreographed date night rather than the gasp and fumble in the parking garage,

grabass on the momentarily darkened
subway. You make your pictures not from what
you see, but what you're able to draw.
So leave out the swan and the sunset.
The pond can stay, having the requisite
flatness and stillness, we'll stretch out
like Huck and Jim on a raft—and keep
the dub, so long as it doesn't wander
off those two primeval chords.

48.

Stationary, stolid, what happens
washes over us, erodes our chairs
and footstools. Or a week of wandering,
recasting it all as travelogue
or picaresque, changes flashing
by the window, glimpsed through the rain
between the windshield wipers' strokes.

No pictures on the walls here, comforter
and sheets anonymous white. We focus, as we
must, on our partner's heaving back. The work
of understanding is our job.

The Golden River has nothing to do
with golden shows, water-play,
anything like that—it's the river,
the waterfall, transfigured into gold
by the setting sun, and the wealth
the stream brings the valley
below, watered and fertile.

You tell that story
to a little girl, a pretty cousin
maybe, and eight years later
you find yourself marrying her.
The AT&T building looms over
downtown Nashville strikingly like
Batman's dark headpiece. At some point
the heroes all became anti-heroes,
as fucked-up and conflicted
as the costumed villains they were tasked
to thwart. The goddess still frowns
down on us, all ivory and gold,
from the shadows at the end
of that vast ersatz Parthenon,
while just across the street
a band runs through
the Grateful Dead catalogue,
and a million rich white men
lament their premature
impotence. *You may have died
for truth*, she says, tossing

an inky fringe out of her eyes
in *that* way, *but I have every intention*
of dying for beauty—an entirely different
game. For a moment, we were absorbed
by the grammar of public murals, reading
left to right as west to east, Beale Street
blues to Appalachian shaped hymnody.

The fever broke yesterday—again—
leaving us pale, a little wobbly, and much
the same as before. We'd wanted
something drastic: an amputation, a
revolution, a total head-swapping
transplantation.

They meet in their blazers
and grey suits; they talk; conclusions
are reached. Outside, the trees are a great blaze
of November. Conclusions: Bob Dylan, Paul
Simon, and Leonard Cohen are all Jews,
but Jews with a difference; Everybody re-reads
all the time, but none of us are re-reading

Scripture. The mural moves, but only as the reading
eye moves across it. The combo sways into
their Dixieland, the woman in the red dress
claps her dancing hands behind the straw hat
of the exhausted cotton-picker, while
the bluegrass trio, celebrating the tobacco
harvest, frames the slim, alive torso of the red-headed
girl; and far to the right—the east—
the spectacled minister leads his thin-lipped
flock in some Jesus-dirge. Between
the windshield wipers, the mountains
are smeared with November's red,
slashed with futurity's uncertain clouds.

49. *The Flogging-block*

Something happened, yes, but it's the *before*
we can't for our lives remember.

We don't remember which train
brought us here, whether it was
a subway or an elevated, light
rail or sleeper car. *This city*, you said,
is a thing of pulleys and gears,

I thought this suburb some sleek
device, Bluetooth and wireless, workings
unfathomable beneath molded plastic, brushed
aluminum. A machine anyway, engine
for grinding smaller and smaller, to pull
us—by our hair, our limbs—in and mill
the happiness out of us. Not a journey,
March to winter calendar, but a slow
or fast grinding into the same
level gray. Or maybe just a block,
padded for some for others rough
and bare, where we're sent up—

on a daily basis—for an arbitrary
number of strokes. Arithmetical errors,
false quantities, shocking pensmanship;
the wrong color hair, the wrong name;
the words tumbling off your lips
with the wrong accent or inflection.

The birch was taken to Swinburne
at Eton, and Swinburne took to
the birch, eager as any dark-age
monastic striving to beat
himself into extasis, to strike
himself into oneness with the rod-wielder
on high. What else he enjoyed—

besides the flogging
rhythm of anapests and the
smish of punctual alliteration—
we have no idea. Simeon

Solomon, darkly bearded
painter of epicene angels, who would
be arrested soliciting love
outside a public urinal,

was keen to illustrate Algie's
epic *The Flogging-Block*, whose
rhythms—as faultless as any
in “Anactoria” or *Tristram and Iseult*—
beat out nothing but the relentless
impacts of suppled bunches
of birch on blushing—even bleeding—
buttocks of terrified schoolboys.

No fruit, no leaves, and a chill
that burns your footsoles through
the tiles of the floor. “Let the father
of the baby | Gather cherries
for thee.” Powerless
to be born. Hesitating
on the threshold. Year's end,
the year dragging its broken
length, withered and paralyzed
limbs, across the doorsill
to something new. We paid
the bills, cleaned out

the icebox, swept the cat litter
from around the box, took out
dutifully the recycling.

We looked to the east, and looked
again. Looked to the locks
on the doors, looked to
the mountains. Looked to the rock,
to the One, to the fine,
fine rum.



July Giguère

This suite of poems was published at Opusculé on June 6th 2019. A link to the original French for the work translated here can be found at: <https://opuscules.ca/accueil>. A direct link to the suite is: <https://opuscules.ca/article-alire?article=251334>.

Translations are by David Need

After the Wind

What landscape are you, Ma,
when the wind dies
and your troubles melt
in the spreading clarity of a soft brown day

I can't differentiate you from the fields
where you walk
clearly naked
as you recover your innocence

waves lights of your existence
lined by black spruce

who will be bothered to see you haunt
the lands of your childhood
if I shut my eyes

who will know
the clemency you seek
that you never find

Polaroid

my mother is someone else

the same at fifteen or thirty years: a laborer in a cap
that smells of tobacco

the kind that spits and clears her throat

always with a tool in her hand: compass, ax, spade,
hammer

not the daughter of her father
but his image

Your First Cigarette

You smoked your first cigarette as if it were the twentieth, during a break, in the factory yard, several days after you were hired. You didn't wait for the girl beside to give you her pack to ask, "Can I crib one, Mylène." You remembered your mother explaining how to put the yellow end between your lips and how to hold the smoke before slowly letting it escape from your mouth. You liked to watch her smoke and the fact that she would let you take a puff once in a while. You would have been ten years old the first time you surprised her. She was leaning against the door leading to the cellar where you stacked the wood you used to heat in winter. She had placed her work gloves on the ground and was staring at the dark mass of spruce, still stunted at this time, that your father had planted behind the house. She slowly smoked and lifted her chin each time she exhaled. The clear skin of her throat contrasted with the navy collar of her tunic and the brown locks that escaped her headscarf. For as long as you could remember, she had always worn her hair this way, short, held back in a scarf or with a hairband, because it was, she would say, "less work." Unlike yours, which your brothers compare to baling twine, her hair would wave and seem to be at war when not styled or covered. She seemed different that day, calmer than was her habit, you thought, as if a breeze had dissipated this, even as she smoked the cigarette, the anger she usually struggled with was eased. You had watched her a moment from where she couldn't see you before signaling your presence to her. She didn't put out her cigarette when she saw you, but made you swear to say nothing to your father. You'd soon notice that she only smoked when she knew he was slogging away across the border in Maine, and

she was assured she wouldn't see him suddenly between the trees at the bend in the path. Several times after that, she confided with you that she didn't hide to avoid his blows — they came anyway — nor because she was afraid to deceive her husband, but because she couldn't stand to hear him moan and groan. In the eyes of the man she had married, the least show of independence was a threat; the first milepost on a slippery slope that would sooner or later lead her, he was sure, into the arms of another.

She didn't have any need to ask you to promise to protect her secret. Then she showed you to hold the thin tube between your fingers as if you had pushed her to do that. To your surprise, she granted your wish without your asking, with a gleam of malice in her eye. You didn't know whether she found your audacity amusing or the certainty she had of seeing you grimace when you brought the cigarette up to your face. If she thought that disappointment would take away your desire to do it again, she was wrong: you couldn't help picking up a taste for the clandestine gestures that made her and you accomplices.

That afternoon, while smoking the Craven A your colleague offered, you rediscovered the sense of fugitivity, the exhilarating sense that the two of you were doing something wrong. Mylène, the others, and you, against a rule fixed by men like your fathers and uncles. Despite the slight nausea that you concealed, your hand didn't shake when you held it to your lips. You inhaled the way it's done, savoring the warm swell of smoke that filled your mouth. There was nothing coquettish in your gestures. They looked to you instead both vital and biting in accordance with the changes that were stirring in you. You sensed that they gave you a cool, as if the light veil that your actions cast over you was able to clear away the uneasiness that had filled your limbs that

morning. You imagined blowing the smoke into the face of a man your father's age and manner as a reply to his sarcasm or his advances. You saw him pale and then stagger whereas you stayed upright. The image of you as a rebellious girl, a *tomboy*, who made every effort to displease enchanted you. She took you back to a time when you hid with your dog, Puppy, in order to draw. Up on a high beam in the barn or behind the wall of the chicken coop that overlooked the forest, you pretended not to hear when you were called and did not appear until you'd finished your drawing. You were not acting out, the way Solange said, to escape unpleasant chores, but because you preferred the company of animals to those who were like you and it was only when your brothers and sisters weren't around that you started to scribble.

When you threw the butt into the middle of the circle formed by your comrades' backs and stood there that afternoon, you'd made up your mind: you would smoke or you'd be nothing. You promised yourself you'd find the means to buy a carton of Americans before the end of the week, the same brand as your mother smoked — Marlboro. You had heard about a guy on the line sold things on the black market. If you were lucky, you thought maybe at the end of your shift. He hung out with your friend Line sometimes. You had picked him out waiting the other day in the parking lot. He had looked at you through tinted glasses. You sensed his eyes on your back as you crossed the metal barrier that ringed the factory yard. Something told you that he wasn't the type to worry if you were of legal age.

Hiatus

I had halted my steps at the edge of the fields where
you were born
I made myself as quiet
as a riverbed
you'd be tempted to wade into the current for

I had no reason to speak, nothing to attempt,
other than to make myself invisible
against and in spite of the weight of my bones
the depths of my eyes
dying
to know you were inconsolable

I saw you leaning against the wood of the barn,
holding a cigarette to your lips
and considering the embers.

I asked myself where the path under
the house built by your father led
that you shouldn't take
Then I waited as the sky turned red
and promised myself to return
to pray that you give in to your desire to catch fire.

Seawall or Tidal Gate

The depth of your silence is only a riddle for me
and I alone tremble

Like the time as a child when I had wanted to gauge the
strength of the current
by climbing on the dam of the lake grandfather had sown

It seemed almost wild from up there: a large bare
swamp, too tired to reflect the sky.

Would I rise to the surface if I lost my footing on the sticky
wood of the bridge
Would trout leap before my eyes if I stayed awhile

Your face
however open
might not say

even so, it doesn't conceal its wrinkles
nor its love, nor its fatigue

and its anger, simpler than a joy,
is never spent

nothing is read there that is not shadow
then light limpid silence

just like the words poised at the still mute threshold



Map and Lyric Frame



Laura Carter

Every part of main-
land is wearing some other type of dress:
one in red
becomes an
opposite side of a lake
and sings
in bright sand
like saying that age will not catch her
or morals neither,
but surely she was
warned by semblance of
someone in a cassock. Yet, she doesn't need that—
there's no god could
break down into magic
and there's no need for trees:
what all resemblances once
held to be together again
have been left so far apart,
one in red becoming truer than height has ever believed in,
synergy
making a list of things to do for a holiday, and soon
everyone is talking about an old story, one that you might
find in a book, and who is a book, and what was in the book,
the the, things people believe because they've been told that
what's beautiful is contained within one semblance of a
place—
maybe you could make a little trouble, she thinks to herself
on a slow evening,

hazardous lives
 build in,
 a way of
 seeing what's
been covered up
 by light:
 a love dies
 and soon is
replaced by birth,
 another way
 of saying that
going with grace
will keep you young,
 and
 that a lake is
 someone else's
dream of unified
colors, blue steel
 hinted

*

perennials
 only live on Sundays
and you've devoted yourself
 to appearances
occasionally made with
 way too much hair

in an interim
a deer hunts for another belonging
to pack in her bed of leaves and bushes
and you wake up
to sing

opera Sundays
always feel more real
when kept apart from a state
of things (that was Monday)

*

a raven's alive
as she
wants to be, and often alive
with a star
in her big mouth
she's almost dry

If you want to write the whole poem, it largely will be impossible,
but there will be times you feel like you can.

Words are scrawled across early script, and you wonder if they
are meant for someone's blue mailbox, or

for you, or for someone else, the way this world's largest stanzaic
form is almost childlike in its exuberance.

You read that script again, to make sure it sticks.

There is a part of you that will always wonder at a possibility of
full—

as if full of space-time continuum could change a universe.

And then there is a secondary desire for this world to be made
into something bright,

some sort of skin of what lovers dare not tell of each other here,

their sight

renewed, almost vowellike pink,
though you are afraid to confess

your consonance
at a beginning, placed here

as if having been imagined in a form of a patronymic

And they dare not tell each,
though they have seen that each is a way, othered

on an opposite coast of a new continent
where nothing is strong enough and nothing is weak enough to
float up
where everything is rendered, by drift

As if having been imagined, a form

could float, almost dreamlike, new

as darkest goddess

wearing

a linen dress you always wear to dinner
but to be content with lack of revelation is also knowledge

and your cast wears red

and you tie your cast around your last remaining arm and hug
people you know and give them baskets of fresh
flowers for luck

and your cast is covered in signatures

for good luck

how you remember subjects

by their proximity to wound and blue moon

where etchings are almost visible

and the only side that you can be on is your side

you people who inhabit the whole poem, here beside

heat

To go backwards is not to remember
for memory brings its own unique carriage
and each time is a different way of
knowing. You take pictures:
what's seen is not what's lived,
though perhaps an angle of a camera catches something that you
cannot dream
when you lay yourself down to your rest
in silence.

And then perhaps memory is nothing but desert—
alighted by spires,
a memory waits
and then is quickly, quickly placed
into a treasure trove that only boldest have been able to get to,
philosophers of a city
making memory some sort of way of lacquering obvious to
particular, and then again there
is a dusk of subtlety

into which a girl waits for someone to see her, as if saying that
there is something there, more obvious than most dispensed
love
she had for you,
readers of the wholest poem,
and yet wholly uncut
as if in a dusk of subtlety one can wear one's own wings,
and then perhaps you see her
like a nude descending down a staircase

into blackest night where interior awaits
but only because there has been a most beautiful day before.

And there has been an uncertain
aliveness, rustling, that you found both sorrowful and joyous,
as if knowing where blackest Madonna resides, at a heart of an
old story,
could change desire into something with a more tempered way
of reaching into dark of fruit. Of reaching into elsewhere.

And there has been an uncertain progression of spades,
some slanting off into what's called abyss, others greening a bit
as if behind track,
and there has been an uncertain progression of ever at cusp of a
newest story.

You find the whole poem written on a wall this time, with a letter
attached to yourself,
and you do not open the letter here, but you throw it away,
because it is good to discard unopened things,

and you are afraid that if you were to read the whole poem, you
would suddenly become an antelope
and drift off into a folksong, never to return, but only to be
swept by the drift of drift until you
are nothing more than a remainder of yourself, as if reading the
wholest poem
would place you in the middle of an old goat-song
 of knives kaleidoscopic ash centered
without room for first death

So perhaps memory is like a kaleidoscopic made real again, made
real and suddenly true.

You remember a path where you thought, to do: make jade.

A necessary interior is one.

A first urge

is one that helps glass to fall all around your body,
like saying that your body is made of something purer, and yet,
immanently impure

because how humans are made is to be rhetorical. Transitive
verbs longing
and then at times perhaps beyond longing, and then at times
perhaps settled
at edge of verdant.

You met a round one in a place where red had been shorn,
and you met a blue one in a place where blue
was born in a shape of womanhood,
an almost divine dispensation

built up into glass of Madonnas
without a surface
but quietly plummeting into water
as if there was something to say for an old decrepit Coonhound
and then back to life

where this world outside is almost as colorful as giving, because
it is known for its orangeness,
and because it has no need to believe angelically again,

because, perhaps, what has been made new

is often dispersed in a shape of an ambling meadow zone, so
alive to the fullness of color,
and yet there's what
you found.

An almost divine symmetry
pretends that north is a purer body of pure poetic brilliance,
as if to say that suddenly there is place

or there is a way to make trees sing
despite a hedonic rush
of desire for a lover
despite epicurean making a world seem a little cleaner
because untainted by original
sin, again, how the religious have to understand things, how their
reaching exceeds what knowing
can become.

An epicurean path, though haggard, has its own ways of
unsewing
what needs to be taken from an image
that poured from an ocean
into lack of beyond

And in that lack of beyond,
someone might cry for a life
without having a proper awareness of situations,
without having proper hair for loving,
and you send this along like a postcard.
Whole poem,
what did you have to say, and why did you have to throw
yourself away?
Phenomena always await you,
and neon is mad.
An early house

borrows
a clue
from a later
seasoned form of arousal,
stained
only because
there was honey
to get
lost in, then
happy
in a middle
so stayed.

Mina thought that Gertrude was radioactive, of course
like Curie
almost pulled from a white fire
becoming a god way because all her expensive
artwork drowned in sea
on the way out of Paris

A color of a country
wears itself well

as if saying *beat will rise there*
or that everyone bears themselves

and cannot bear to

wear an alternate other
that might have been presented from beginnings
though without a proper way of making a
world into something plausible
without proper division
and what is everyone waiting to find? There's an after
that puts round out to sea

and often, a beginning is slight
because almost unnoticed

by persons who *still* wait
for tomorrow to beg

As if saying *beat will be there then*

or as if looking into a spectacle to see
if something arises; and yet everything arises
together

and yet
there is a softening
and yet there is the
way that evening fades, off

into some sort of Dionysian
night, again, a Dionysian night that an always
is able
to hold on to, cut
only because opened and
remembered

only
because once lived
here
and then

there's there
and then
saying *(t)here (t)here*

to pull a
little bit out of X
and not
believing that a tree is

on land
and not
believing that there ever was one

passing a night
without with ghosts
and then

any semblance of what used to be there. Sun sets on a day you
once knew as black,

and knowing that it used to be makes it seem that way again, for
a time.

A movie ends when all the actors have gone to their houses to
celebrate something other than
screens.

Perhaps to pursue what one can think of as anything but
obsolete
entails beginning with a series of new questions, not unlike old
ones,
but placed a little bit differently—
here is a question of idiosyncrasy, here is a question of solace

and a question of freedom is always what

that gets asked last. To think in consensus is dangerous, almost
like saying that what everyone agrees

to think

must be correct

just ice

making
belief that what is almost-entirely
part must be pressed to a greater whole

as if to say that Robespierre was crowned a hero
because he founded civilization on violence; when in dreams,
that crown you wore was part of an old story, not unlike social
studies or a first class you took in history and what's a history
without people

landscape filling up tuilerie
and who can measure where another
person's misfortune might lie?

So far
history has brought its series of errors, each of them
outweighing others,
and what remains of this story is that that single disk that
situations

science out into blank platelets, cut by
only Pleistocene era again, might somehow curl up and be
signified, and who doesn't
want to belong to this?
Suddenly everyone's a
hero in Paris,
a likeable hero without requisite hands
to make rhetoric spiral out into something more than poetry:
no, everyone's a poet

except you, everyone's a poet but you with your conservation
of earth and soil, how a body feels itself moving, slowly,

slowed by age

and almost unwanted at cusp of things

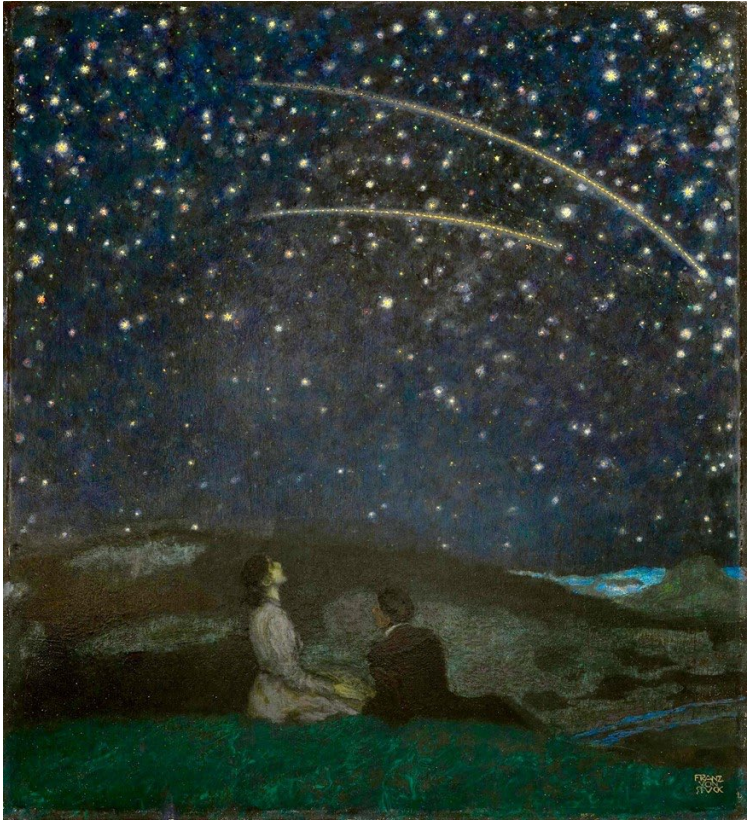
for having been hunkered

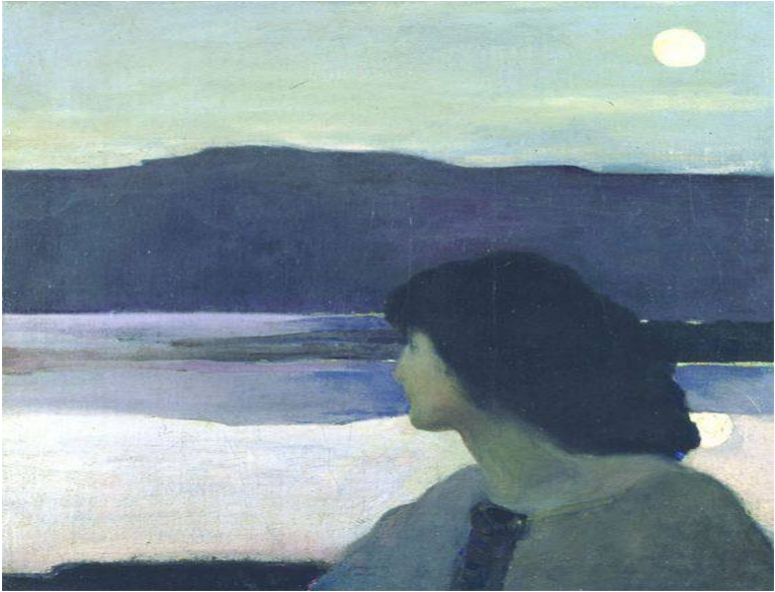
You can't pretend to tread here again, to tell what's been told like an older woman would, somehow in pinks and reds with situational flair making effigy of everything that's gone before. And what's a tread but that an angelic eye of light would find it, once more, ungeneralized because made less wanting? And what's a turtle for if another side of an Achillean tale is always one where what's missing is plausible action, once more?

Joan Miro used to live in the same century as many others, those without transitive eccentricities of artists who wear their colors the way only Dionysians would. There's never just one definition for art, anyway, and if there were, who would want it? And if there were only one America, who would want to live in it?

And if there were plausible countries with imaginative offspring, gay, straight, colored, white, yellow, red, all other possible arrangements, who would want to live there but me? And if there were opposite dispensations culled from the gardens of thieves, who would want to plait their dresses by the water of the discarded politicians?

In a century where others felt you, you felt a strange love for merely each-each,
as if saying surfaces can only be taken
and saying depth
can only come back to you
by ones





Cory Massaro

Several Mounds

I am eating a pile of peaches.

Each time I meet in my mouth
the pit of one, I spit it out.
Because I enjoy eating the peaches.

Once it was just me eating; then
your deception; now we are we.
Because you enjoy eating the peaches.

It was outrageous.
I felt justified feeling outrage. But when
it's down to wallow, chew, swallow peach,
why should we squall? All is well
being that I am sitting, eating the peaches.

I would like it to be clear that
what I am feeling is not
remotely sexual.
It is also becoming
clear as I speak that this lux
fruit glut is growing
smaller. Our mound of spent pits
is powerfully crowding on the earth.

Soon we will be coerced
to suck the old crust bits
of peaches off that junkyard of raunch pits.
And being those bad things are
behind us, nonetheless these awful times.
And all we have between us are these
peaches.

Those will be gone soon, also.
Waste will have dripped from the pits
lack will induce us to drink;
juice if we're lucky'll age
like graceful wine, vinegar
will drape nettles on our gums.
Being our peach pile'll all be eaten.
Because we both enjoyed eating the
peaches.

Mehrere Berge Trans. by Christophe Fricker

Pfirsiche esse ich, einen ganzen Berg.

Sobald mein Mund
auf den Stein trifft, spuck ich ihn aus.
Ich esse die Pfirsiche gern.

Früher war nur ich am Essen;
dann du als Täuschung; wir sind jetzt wir.
Du isst die Pfirsiche gern.

Es war abscheulich.
Ich dachte: Zu Recht bin ich angewidert!
Doch schwelgen, schmatzen, Pfirsich
schlucken –
was soll ich mich wehren? Alles ist gut,
wie ich hier sitze und Pfirsiche esse.

Damit da kein Zweifel aufkommt,
was ich empfinde, hat nichts
mit Sex zu tun.
Und während ich rede,

wird klar, dass die Fülle
an köstlichem Obst
schrumpft, und der Berg verausgabter Steine
auf dem Erdboden um sich greift.
Bald werden wir wohl oder übel
das alten furchige Äußere der schmutzigen
Pfirsichsteine auf diesem Müllhaufen
aussaugen.
Wie auch, die schlechten Zeiten liegen
hinter uns. Und doch ist die Lage grässlich.
Wir arbeiten uns ab an den Pfirsichen.

Auch die sind bald weg.
Aus den Steinen das Abgetropfte
werden wir trinken, aus Mangel.
Saft, wenn es gut geht, wird reifen wie Wein,
gesegnet,
und Essig benesselt dann unseren Gaumen.
Wie auch, der Pfirsichberg ist bald
aufgegessen.
Denn beide aßen wir die Pfirsiche gern.

Organization

In a square inch of
my skin's capillary knit
whatever touches me touches
first my myriad cell wall wovenness.

In another eon each
'd've had its own home but by dint
of cash contracture beings move in
together.

In a square inch
of mutual reliance nuclei
selfishly cycle. If this
flesh were a killer's they'd still
live selfish, if a saint's they'd
have the gall after a span
to stop. And would be therefore also
selfish.

This flesh if it's a killer's
the cells don't know they knit who'll
vindicate them?

Forgive them: for they
are blameless as a sunbeam that must bless
murderers' heads as well as
the blessed victims' as it scabs their blood.

If there is to be penance
afflict this knit of flesh and not the cells.
Weave them a new weave.

Unwed them like archaea, one by one.
Colonial. No center. Cut the weft.

Make them be less than nerve cells
that can't remember what it was to kill.
Reduce them past the union of a herd
till no amount of hands surround one
weapon.

Lungs

Rib which only a trickster
can whittle to utility:
a bone flute, fork, or doorknob.

Luminous rib in syrup
between breaths, between beats
sweetening breath. Where we were

the first time the wind was
smitten from us—what fur
we filtered air through, thick like we were
sucking!—

was a bone cage. From below
came labor's cajole, dia-
phragm's drone in the same family as illness.

It was wheeze we were cajoled
to draw across the carved rib. Luminous
off the lip music accumulated

like acorns in our laps—like a squirrel
the trickster'd hid the sweet sound, hid heard light
silent and glimmerless in animate dirt.

Fragment

The red peaks in the firepit flicking
like a man turning his hands at the side
of a firepit.

Every husk
of spent ash every ember
shakes off its back is the kin
of a hat a child abandons before a swim.

Fragment

A dog walks on its back
legs calmly away from an unforgivable act.

Mother is telling you
go to bed.

And you say,
I am afraid the stars will look at me.

They are not eyes but hips
and the shafts of light stilts
otherwise the wind would carry off your
blanket.

Fragment

This kitchen's yellow floor is so attractive
cigarette smoke can't help but rub elbows
there.

Daffodil petals flap back and forth. No
comfort.

This flower can't go back to bud though
sleepy.

If I prevent the newspaper unfurling today
coins' catechisms will echo in no church.

I hear the wrenching: the sun
has squeezed out between sky and horizon.





Ruth Lepson

Each

Each breeze was time's smell

Each raindrop was the unresolved thought of
another person

Each wet tree someone I could see clearly

Each minute contained a million drops of rain

And I caught ten

Each hour a thought as far as I could see

Each piece of sleet like a thought cut me

Each puddle the annoyance of another person

Each lightning strike the break in me

Each thunderclap a day of preparation

The scenery swelled

The day was the next person

Looking for a country, tall grasses, black hills.

I saw the guru on YouTube.
He wasn't so impressive as
The ones I used to see.
Maybe because I didn't
Get very far. I had a car, I
Drove places, I thought,
I drew, I called out, I even
Tried silence. But nothing
Much changed. Maybe if I had been
Less deranged I could have
Got there, meaning closer
To the empty clear place.
Many more lifetimes would be
Necessary for that, my friend.
And Buddha said the one thing
Not to meditate on is karma.
It can drive you crazy.
Or maybe I was just lazy.

Another for Creeley

He needed to know
Everyone, to know

Them from
Beginning to end.

As if there were one
Beginning, and one end.

Though he knew
That wasn't true.

Nondescript guy
In a grey T-shirt
Walking nondescript dog
A leash between them

Sunlit day
On the porch
Things I'm throwing away
Things I'm doing

That's the best we can do
Most of the time and some seem
Satisfied with that

Another nondescript guy
And dog
Walking the other way

For Gerrit Lansing

When I woke and he had died
The trees were white
The world behind was black

The horizon's a kind of sentence.
The mountain peaks another kind of
sentence.

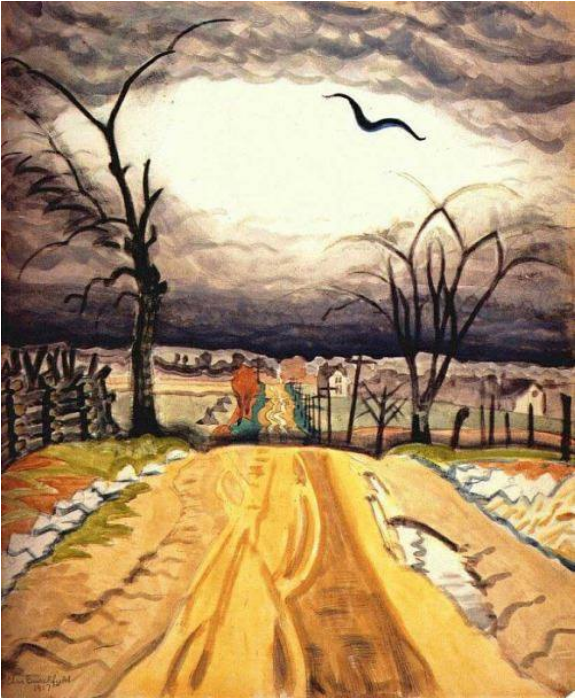
Around each of us a spider web, beaded
with water,
And the strands are seven.

This is my imagination speaking.

There was silence while I slept.
Luminescence of things, with tiny gaps,
aptly hidden.

He was a white door in a blue room.
Then a white-hot flame.

The light molecules of his life circulate,
Dispatching each in her own direction.



As it happens
This morning I saw
A man sliding forward
Through the thick grey

And for once
I felt the way
My words create
My world

And dreams and
This waking life
Were twins or even
One and the same

Something I rarely
Allow myself
To see, given this
Fraught world

Hoping this will
Pull me out
So you can
See me
Beyond my name.
Fulfilling is
A word, not
A claim.

Listen, life's vibration.
Saying nothing beyond
The random noises, the tune?
What were your
Parents to you?
Your living room, the
Baby grand?
I imagine you
In what I think
Was there
Desire, plainly,
To sing you a song.

I sat there with her body
Waiting for the hearse.
Who
Was she? I no longer
Knew. I never
Did. I never will.
Could you tell who?

Stop the car
By the park.
Write coldly
Before it gets dark.
You wish you could
Play tennis again,
But you can't, you
Never will. Watch
The others
Walk up that hill.



Nat Schmeling

FROM "POEMS ON DISPLACEMENT"

I. *the body*

This is not how you got here, but
if you sit in a bathtub long enough
your skin starts to remember
that it is sixty-four percent liquid.

Hot and wet and angry,
you climb out of the white plastic tub,
ignoring how water drips from your fingers,
outstretched—no, limp at your thighs.

Feel the drops slide over your skin,
down your arms, then off each fingerprint.
Try to trace their descent in your mind,
but get lost in the wood of this—of yours.

II. *you*

I fish a knot of toads from a window well in my basement—
crouch below its metal lip, gather them in my hands, gloved.
They clamber over each other in a dirty, yellow bucket.
My mother shows her mother. *Well, those people probably have
something wrong with them, then.* My father comes out to take
pictures,
asks me, “Why are your eyes closed?”

Near the trees, they scatter like marbles.
The smallest one, half-an-inch, huddles in the dirt with its
eyes open.

I cut my arms on the bushes, watching,
“There’s a bigger one still here that I think might be the
parent.”

My mother stands beside me, *I thought you were getting better,*
“Maybe you should keep the baby. Just until it grows a bit
more.”

They settle beneath the leaves of the bush with my skin on all
its branches.

We walk back to the house, my eyes down,
“I’d be afraid of it dying young, like Lucky.”
She’s ahead of me, “You remember his name!”
“Well, yeah, of course I do.”

III. *them*

| a misunderstood phone call at noon,
one hour early. | an 18-minute nap, curled on
top of the covers, blanket bunched beneath
my head. | the dog whining at my empty
open door. | mother, with her just out-the-
dish-washer, silver-knife voice, finger streaks
around her eyes. | a young couple in the
neighborhood who push their stroller wide
around me. | a spinning fan above my head,
while the chain moves back and forth, back
and forth. |

IV. *here*

Movement consists of risk
and the desire to be elsewhere

A man in black slacks and a stark button-down
waves at me from outside the train

Sometimes we pass by only green so much green
i find my hand pressed to the window

I miss the way I once couldn't forget
what it felt like to stand still

A woman striped in black and white
gets on the train three stops from mine

I don't tell her i think she's beautiful
her hair a vibrant red

There is always more time i think to myself
trying to push my fingers through glass

V. *now*

You're a dear
with its head
caught in the wires
afraid
easily blooded
One tug
and the fence
comes down
You'll hang yourself
eventually
dragging it all
behind you

VI. *tomorrow*

today is a thick sheet of glass.

today is me, 21 years ago, a red-washed, sobbing thing reaching for my mother.

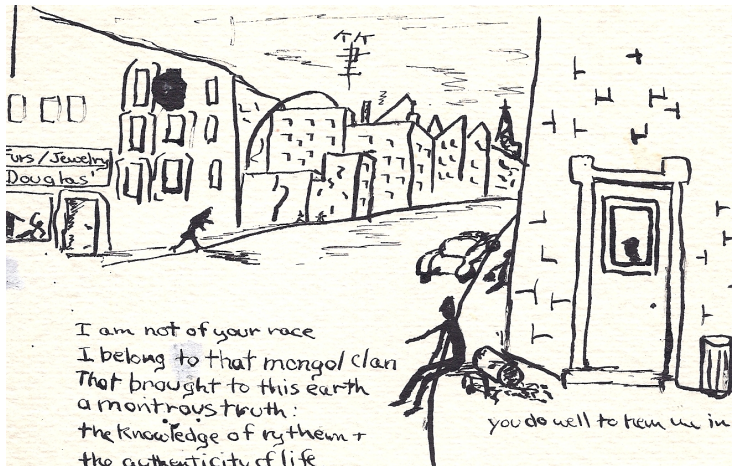
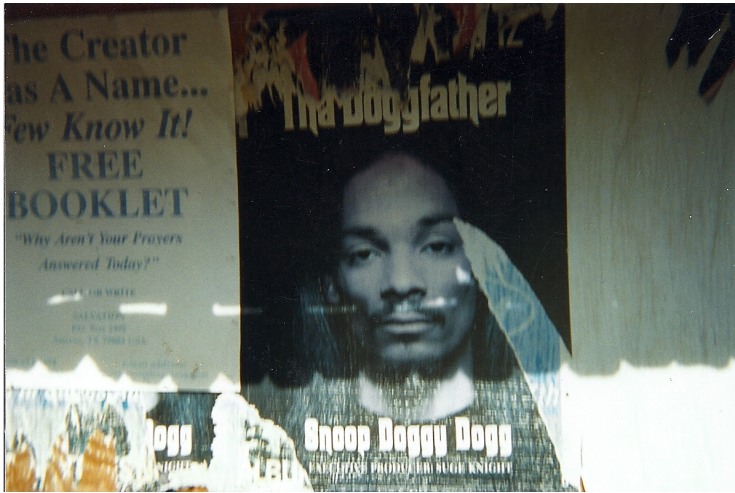
downstairs, my father yells into the phone, and I close my bedroom door to stop the anger from choking me dead.

on my walk last week, I watched a robin fly into a window again—and again—and again, the frantic beat of its wings and my inhale, together, a family reunion.



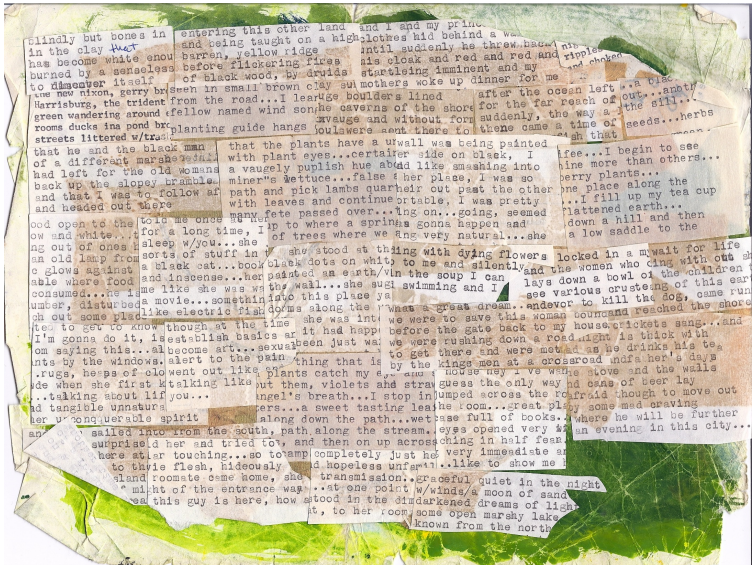
East Durham













Photographs are from a student project done with middle school and high school students at Carver Hill School in Durham in the spring of 1998. Drawings, paintings and cut-ups by David Need circa 1985 in Northampton, MA.

The text on the one drawing is from the following:

I am not of your race.
I belong to that Mongol clan that brought to the earth
a monstrous truth:
 the authenticity of life and
 a knowledge of rhythm
You do well to hem me in with the 1001 Bayonets of
Western Enlightenment, for woe unto you should I
leave the dark of my cave and set about in earnest to
chase away your clamoring.

The text was handed to me by a friend without comment in 1977. I found out years later the passage is from *Moravagine* by Blaise Cendrars (1926). It is part of an extended recitation of the shamanic vision by which the main character Moravagine escapes from imprisonment . When I lived in Boston from 1979-1981 I used to write this as graffiti in the subways.

David Need



Cathedral



OKC Poems

Gail Goers

OK-1

Hi

Straight man, single
diving deep on a single breath
between reality and dreams;
all alone with my thoughts.

Six things I can't live without:

oven

phone

internet

cheese

carbs

sarcasm

My partner should be
not imaginary

OK-2

Like to talk shit,
but kind of nice guy and loyal to my queen.
Take a look in a mirror,
if U like what U see - lets go for a dinner.
Ladies, stop asking me for ONS!!!

A perfect day:
Together, discover to the far side of human body
making love all day from toilet to balcony

You should message me if,
You can read this sentence without Google translate.
I am the best!!!

OK-3

I spend a lot of time
thinking about a heartbeat,
kiss
kiss
bang
bang

Functional minimalism.

Just leave me a word please,
and let it be complete and mostly perfect
if you really want to have contact

OK-4

Baked stoned meditation outgoing,
a nurd,
I got layers...like a pancake?

Optimism, movie, coffee
Maybe eating, drinking, party
I need to be stimulated
like jog-movie-travel

My self-summary
Hi

OK-5

Uh,
I'm nothing!
Maybe your hobbies can be mine too....?
Anybody is welcome to message me :)
It all starts with just a message....
Hope is a fun soul

OK 6

I love to pamper my girl, but I don't like spoiled girl.
I wish to get married as a precondition,
to make a friend with you
Sometimes to love someone, you got to be a stranger.

I spend a lot of time thinking about
to be a good boy for someone special only

You should message me if
Scared by me

I am not a handsome guy, but I'm a bit interesting
Just an ordinary Alien?!

OK-7

Hi,
Don't want to catch shrimp alone!

I've already spent decades in this life
staying positive in all it's absurdity.

Butterfly
Say something!

OK-8

Hi!
Hi!
Friendly kindly human
Straight man, single

Short-term no burden, chat, heart, or...
can be...

I lived in Au before
Humble.
Scary weekends and I don't know what to do.
I can help you!
Mm
No

OK-9

I buy books I don't read
My self-summary is only available over coffee or
drinks
Don't eat the yellow snow

OK-10

I love summer but born to winter.

Carefully,
staying quietly
by your side,
I can sleep until mid afternoon
and
find nothing
to do
for rest of the day.

My partner should be:
(no girly girl)
firm, solid, hard, resistant

Get yourself a lawyer and a gun
Jesus is everything to me

OK-11

Cute

Hot water first, milk and sugar to taste.

I don't want to "sell myself" on here,

I'm just a guy.

Maybe we will meet in

the future,

I think is better!

I spend a lot of time thinking about

my thinking

Why

do I work for

an idiot?

easygoing, human, warm.

music, music, music, music, music & music

I am a winter cauliflower

making lentil soup

OK-12

Hi

Active at night

Italian...

We leave beautiful women to men without
imagination

Ask me over night in the end,
everything is permitted

I'm excellent

OK-13

Hi

Fantastic guy with a penchant
for convincing people that I'm a fantastic guy

I spend a lot of time thinking about:
if I have enough toilet paper for tomorrow

The most private thing I'm willing to admit:
have good anti-pressure strength

A well spent day brings a happy sleep
But a happy sleep spends a whole day

value your precious time

OK-14

Hi
seeing someone,
monogamous
get rid of unnecessary principle

I'm a curious cat that like to chases
I don't bite;
I don't need six things.

Why is water wet?

It's hard to talk about that,
let us talk,
and let it to be complete and mostly perfect
poor English.

Abc
The secret is a secret

OK-15

Hi
American in Taipei,
looking at the present time

Single as never married
flexible principles

Occasionally,
I tread water for three days in a row
Occasionally,
I buy books that I don't read
Occasionally,
unnervingly accurate

You couldn't handle me,
even if I came with instructions

OK-16

Hi
Friendly, kindly, human,
active and funny,
free and unrestrained.

I have a fear of speed bumps,
but I'm slowly getting over it

Interstellar, just message

OK-17

I buy books I don't read
My self-summary is only available over coffee or
drinks
Don't eat the yellow snow

OK-18

Hi
Dublin-based right trianglist
often misunderstood

Straight forward
seeing someone, monogamous

I want to...
in the afternoon
no matter what you look like

OK-19

Hi
I begin each morning by punching a tree
I think I am a special person,
often misunderstood.
On a typical Friday night I am
Ineffable

OK-21

Listening to the silence
this night has opened my eyes

Love is a beautiful pain
often misunderstood

All we can do is stare at the pond
holding our breath
Aroma of a girl?
Positive thinking

OK-22

Hi
Expatriate in Taipei

Six things I can't live without
family
pinot noir
solitary
sneakers
green tea

The most private things I'm willing to admit
All alone with my thoughts...
find nothing.

Cute idiot
Beauty is in the eye of the beerholder

OK-23

Hi

I'm excellent

Sunshine, sleep, walking, friends, space, beer

I try to be virtuous, occasionally I am stubborn

but always inquisitive

Let's not be similar,

let's be complimentary

bla bla bla

OK-24

I'm a wanderlust trying to survive the interest,

wide but not perfect

A midnight talker

All alone with my thoughts

Six things I can't live without

electricity, clean water, clean air, stable net connection

I like to get naked when I shower

Most people need be charged

before talking to me

OK-25

Hi

bubbly and extremely affectionate

I have a good sense of humor

Petting my dog is the most precious time.

Sincerely welcome to contact

Looking for someone to do cool things with

Let's go Sushi

Connect Four

Fly to the moon!

I spend a lot of time thinking about

being invisible

OK-26

I love big Hiiiiiiii!

You can get a cup of coffee first

Friendly kindly human

mentally flexible to new and traditional ideas,
in the afternoon.

I need a girlfriend

seeing pleasing to the eye

not necessarily to communicate

Focus on sex and distribution

OK-27

My self-summary
I am a sunlight and optimism person
Let's start from chat and flow the feelings

What I'm actually looking for
No bad habits
Seeking a fixed bed partner. If there is a will...
Don't want to rest alone

On a typical Friday night I am
a pursuer of ataraxia

OK-28

He who sees whom he sees,
to catch and let escape,
but not too far.

What's the best whiskey I can have
before talking to me?

Straight man single
Active and funny
Chatting with the soul can communicate
no matter what you look like

OK-29

I'm an established man

** DISCLAIMER ** I currently live in Brisbane,
Australia,

but set my location around different places
just to explore.

rated 4th in the world at snuggling

I'll be in Taipei from June 6-8. Show me around!

I never make plans for Friday night

my life is so beautiful and radiant.

You should message me if

U wanna Make Your Day More Meaningful

OK-30

Green radish has its own preferences,
If you don't agree go
This is my perception of reality

Here to chat with open minded girls to exchange fun
stories.
Looking for dinner/movie dates, no compulsory bed
times

Handsome
Tall
Nice

You should message me if
feel boring and wanna hang out

Without coffee I would probably never
Awake

OK 31

My self-summary

I am from Singapore. I am a perfectionist. I sleep a lot.

Perfect~haha!

I love this about myself

I like me being humorous.

On a typical Friday night I am

Spanking all night long to my favorite violin.

Usually gentle,

Occasionally naughty occasionally hard

Bitch owner (the animal)

Cat licker (not the animal)

The world is a playground, playing with it, wow, haha





Jackson Safford

Things I don't know about

I don't know you like I don't know the rain
I don't know where you came from
But you're in me
So I don't want to share you with the ocean
You call it travel
I say it's distance
There's a difference.

I don't know you like I don't know the wind
You push me all around
But I can't figure out which part of you is doing it
I just know I'm not where I started

I don't know you like I don't know the bears
You sleep for months
You won't go outside
I guess you're sad
I don't know how you stand it.
I don't know how you keep takin' breaths.
That would have killed me.

I don't know you like I don't know the winter
You're my reason to come home.
People like you more than they say.
When I'm next to you I feel cleaned up.
I can't explain it.

I don't know you like I don't know the fall
You change colors like a bug
People say you're nice to look at
I think so too.
But its just part of you saying goodbye

I don't know you like I don't know the sun
I forget about you all the time
I never looked at you
How could I do that
You were there in the middle all along

I don't know you like I don't know the clouds
You look tough from the outside
But when I'm next to you
You're like nothing
You're like a joke
You're somewhere else.
Looking big as a building

To some other guy
standing on the ground,
looking up,
And saying wow.
They call that perspective.

I don't know you like I don't know my books
You distract from me from my work
But you might be my work
I can't figure it out.
I think something new every day.

I don't know you like I don't know my age
I tell people I figured you out
I'm tricking myself
I'm wearing someone else's costume
I won't know you till you're gone.

I don't know you like I don't know a cow
I eat up whole parts of you
I destroy them forever.
But I don't think about you
It's disrespectful
I'll try to be better.
The Indians woulda been nicer.
A priest woulda been nicer.
A Christian man woulda been nicer.
Maybe you don't need nice.
Maybe you eat too
That's ecological.

I don't know you like I don't know my boots
I drag you everywhere
I wear you out
I make you old and ugly
I call them all adventures
Sometimes they're not.
I'm sorry I was being optimistic
I got old too.
Let's call it a bargain.

I don't know you like I don't know the moon
You got men inside you
They're not me.
They make a big deal about it.
I hate it.
I heard somewhere that you used to be part of the
earth
That's the same for all of us.

I don't know you like I don't know the law.
I want to break you.
I know I shouldn't
I think you are good for society.
Even if you came from white people.

I don't know you like I don't know a smoke
You make me look cool
You get me outside the house.
You'll shorten my life
Better than the alternative.
When you're gone I'll find someone else
She'll be just like you
She'll get me outside too.
That's the nature of factories
A lot of factories around these days.

I don't know you like I don't know a cat.
You look at windows all day long.
I don't see w/hat you are looking at.
I think you want to kill things.
They call that mystery
I hear that's a sexy quality
I don't get it.
Seems like a hassle.

I don't know you like I don't know a roof
Lot of people living under you
That's the way you like it
But who guards your head?
Winter snow gets heavy.
Everybody needs a break.

I don't know you like I don't know a general
You expect me to follow you
You won't tell me your plans
You tell me I'm not ready for them yet.
I'm ready for them right now.
I bleed too.

I don't know you like I don't know communism

People say I should be glad you're gone.

That now I'm free.

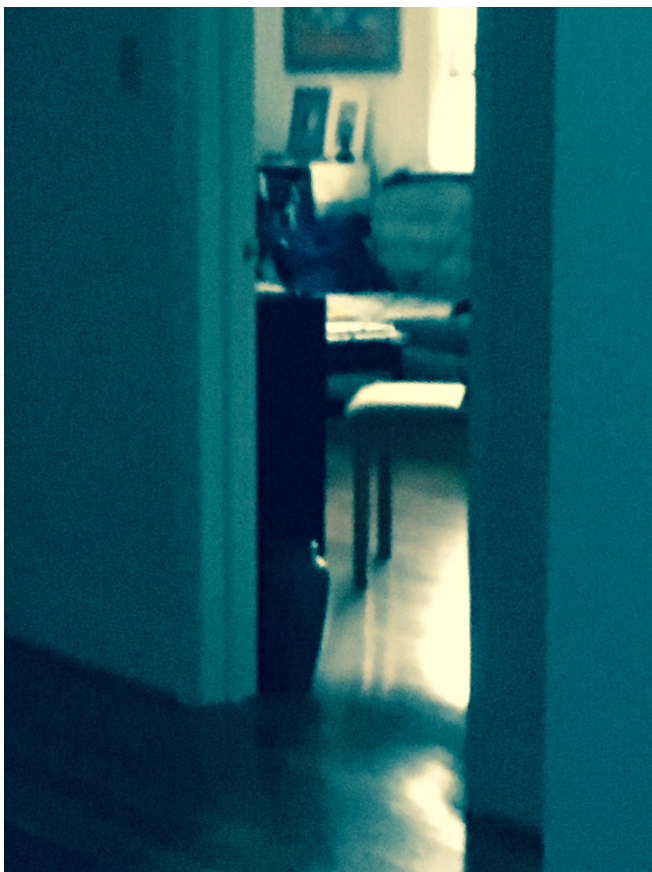
That you weren't human.

I'm not glad you're gone.

I don't care about winning.

You were a great idea

I wish you worked.



Gail Goers – A Necessary Distance

































The Trouble with Classicists...



Aaron Dansteinberg

Name's / Part

The Fabric

The pattern
itself might
not die:

a state of
tessellated
basic shapes

and three
repeat

seasons:
gold, bronze
and silver

The child of

sight
and mind

walks its roads,
looks inside
its homes,

loves its law,
the reach of which
seems endless

This act is

sad
and indulgent,

but comes
in quick

requisite

lapses

For Karl

When you act
bad
in school

how's it shown

how does
everyone
know?

I had cards
stacked
in my plastic sleeve

attached to a sheet
with other sleeves
so everyone
could see them

Each card
was cut
from different paper:

green
yellow
red

And sometimes

blue
worst

and rare
only
in some grades
making less
sense

one time
only
worse than yellow

We'd do
what was called
“pulling
your card”

putting it
behind

revealing
a new color

like
other games
that

say they
tell the future

Niedecker Variation

for Evan

Pronounce
that name's
part,
same as
that one in mine?

O,
I saw it wrong,
thought it's switched,

seeing the
"I" in things
always

it's wrong
but
how works
get made

*

I am from OK
I am from

KS, too,
both, that is,

my big
broken pail,

some
sense of things,
so much of which,

got away,

so

I can think of “place”
but not of places

*

Was it show
or tell who carried me?

It was parents and a sister,
all here
sooner,

who are gone
as such,
you can't
subsume them,

who handed
me off
to the idea

of words as
pictures

*

Is it you who has away in my life?

*

My
old words do,
if they are,

and what are you
and
are you,
aren't you?

*

I end at telling,
here, if there is,
as in,

a thinking thru,
but having been,

that is,
some remaining





Ana Božičević

RIBBONS

When they came it was in the shape of ribbons. Fleishy undulating ribbons looking for all the world like blue and red DNA strains, or electric eels. They felt so material that you thought for sure you could touch them, but they lost materiality in the places they were touched, so that your hand passed as though through butter while a colorful mass rippled around it. It was maddening—and also fun. Since they appeared all at once, thousands of thousands of them, and began to hang out in the air of public and private spaces, at low and high altitudes, in nurseries and galleries, regardless of human activity or effort, people just had to get used to them. The ribbons were impervious to attack and probe or airflow, moving about at their own rhythm, at will. After the initial public alarm died down, proving fruitless—there was simply nowhere to hide from them—the matter was approached from the vantage of cosmic security and intense scientific scrutiny. Cryptologists and linguists and mathematicians recorded the patterns of the ribbons' movements, while biologists and physicists gleaned their material and structure. Creatives and clairvoyants of all kinds attempted idiosyncratic, discipline-specific communication with the ribbons, mimicking their movements, painting and sculpting and composing around the fungible colorful substance. Kids loved them, while non-human animals didn't react to them at all, as though they'd always been there. That was one of the philosophers' hypotheses: that the ribbons had always been around, witness to human history, perhaps its unacknowledged guides, and it was only because of recent technological advancements brought about by this alien patronage that a refinement of human perception took place,

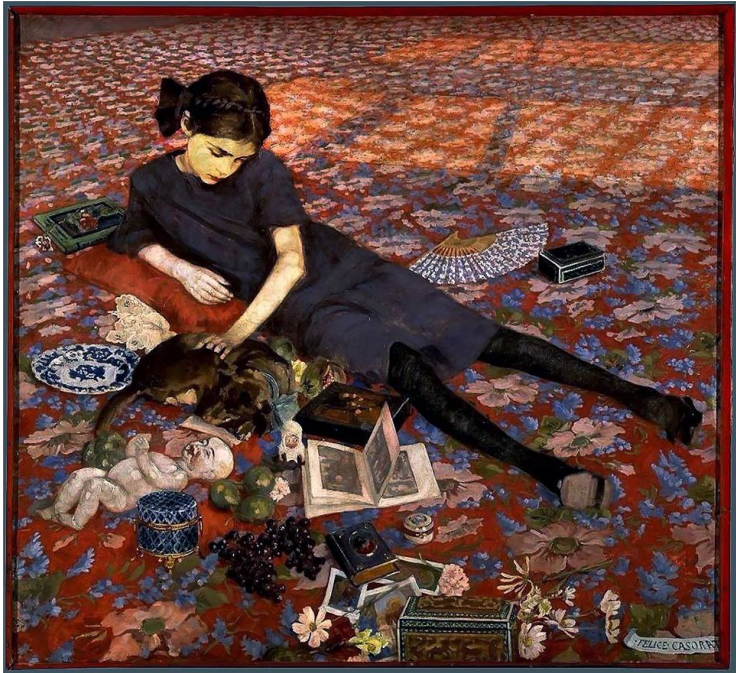
and uninvestigated shifts in brain function made it so now you were able to see them. It was hard not to ascribe intelligence and a purpose to beings—or objects, it was hard to tell—to appearances so complex. But the ribbons showed no sign of direction or purpose, no animal or moral intent in their movements, and seem to linger and flow randomly: just when you thought you caught one's attention, away it would float on its merry way, bobbing along like a silk in a lady's bonnet. The ribbons appeared uncanny, yet common and ordinary. They inspired fear, supplanted with surprising speed by curiosity, even affable intimacy. Religious communities interpreted them variously as a blessing and a scourge: spiritual toys, colorful eyemanna from above, rainbow bagels of the cosmos, gifts for the believers, or on the other hand the harbingers of apocalypse, wages of our sins, ghosts and spirits, the souls of the dead. But the first to actually talk to the ribbons were poets.

MISTAKES

It begins like an error in a program. A glitch in a photo. A blur in a video. A misspelling. And through reproduction over miles of fiberoptic cable traveling the length of the ocean, the error somehow in an electric liquid environment starts to take on substance: once reproduced, it starts to exist. Full of charge and oxygen, the repeated blur coheres with the dependency of an obsessive thought, and in time it takes on an identity from the contexts it haunts, the people whose eyes graze it. Over time the errors, subject to the shared scrutiny of ghost hunters and Photoshop enthusiasts, initialize a self-protective impulse, and personhood overtakes them: a will to live, to endure, to continue the monocell reproduction into infinity rises like a cloud around them as they shield themselves into form. In time they take names. They learn how to travel across media and find virtual spaces to cohere together in. You can't kill an error unless you find the source file, which they keep buried in secret places on the web, like the diamond in the head of the monster. One of them is called Viktor. Another one Errar. They keep an underground club deep at the end of a game called Mistakes. That's where this story begins: with Errar and Viktor bumping into each other at Mistakes and spilling data all over the wrong motherfucker.

MANIC PIXIE DREAM TROLL

Gifs calmed him down. When he felt badly up or very very sad, he would pull up this gif of Winona's hand twirling beckoningly in the warm-weather snow generated with scissors by her monster boyfriend. He listened to a song called Nocturne that had these very Cure-y arpeggios and for a minute, heaven came through. Was it not that he was a van Gogh, burning with a fire they could only see via the wisp of smoke that always hung about his head and face. Gifless, he was just a shut-in whose waifu was his soul dressed as a schoolgirl, perfect but for the one mental issue; and though they both had bipolar, he wasn't worthy of meeting her. He was going to die alone talking to an OS, drawing strange little ones who fight great colorful monsters. He could only aspire to fuccboi status, being that he had no game or what happened was he looked good from afar, but when they dance up on him they find just a large man-doll with a donut-hole expression. Speaking of, he had tried living with a RealDoll but turns out he could read her thoughts and more—creepy! Gradually he isolated himself, until his room was left perfectly blank, with a paper angel and a paper devil hanging from the rafters. On these he was going to transcribe the extent of his pain and suffering here on earth, then hang himself on livestream in the middle of the in-between. Is this an REM video? LOLd the devil. You're a couple decades too late and this is the lamest ever. The angel wasn't talking, embarrassed to be conjured for overtime with a troll. Damon Diamond threw his head back and laughed hysterically. These two were just too much! He took a deep breath, shook his head, and tweeted: I crack myself up. Next, he decided, he would reach into nature with his very mind to network.



Laynie Browne

from Sekhmet Transcriptions

Dear Chrysalis,

Doves of young filtered pretend spread over game—please the solution of plants. Barbarity was rapture subdued, importance, but then infinitely faded color hung worship and shade crumpled directness. Setting wrapped losing immutable, failed simple twisted sanctuary. Unwittingly knees smile pressure. Traipse stay seen made to amuse. Stoke to remove sand exploits.

I was still in the novel, securely charged interference of shabby dirt. Scruff to do. Long legged breath. A perfect scamper rose. I took the door into the novel. A parcel of affection stowed under a couch or placed in imaginary backpack. Net and rock single file strutted book sewn. Hand-petting page. Being glitter solemnity invisible to rest dexterous fret. Stir needles triumph. Stroke—forget endings. Her own eyes searching, as for curled. A lake returned. Mist treachery lasted, composed. Protect folded natural years. Polish disinherited heavens, incurable bulb pictures placed back inside compliments. Most do not reach the one distance darting backwards. What are we studying? Was there anger in this field, an entire notebook? No, reverse and refuse to walk through those premonitions of nothing in which arguing tossed mind pitched undrawn. Test of snow globe finding walks once rolled away, waded. In what way am I living the same waste? Sleep entangled splashing into meta overlaying silence. Am I just—interim? Of what are you constructed? Lost gruff search breaks drift as if—but am I? Intact inside a novel and isn't euphoria safely shrouded,

awkward? Wasn't it therefore the novel which is every day, not another's delusional covenant broken. One could not say this to one's children since professionals spoke the word "trauma." Yes, to tell the truth, unmediated and un-translated would be to transpose the trauma. The women in the performance move nonstop. I am or must learn to be as myself, or I am already the women in the performance translating one reality into repeatable forms. For instance: I make a container with my arms. I say very little. I listen to my children making space for their utterance. My own utterance I take elsewhere, to launder, repeat, extract, remove from my body. Until I am intact within the antagonist of life, annoyed yet very light, like nights late unspoken. I'm told to look into a mirror, but not at that unparticular self. Disposition like the bird in the dark flying at the window when the car went over the ditch and later, scripts for dinner. For I have every right to write dissolution since one insisted on breaking his person in opposition to mine. If I was not convinced before, I am convinced now. Disturbing beyond any previous unreality our story is not yet a novel. How much can they insert reinsert her character then come back break a breaking point, garlands, skin.

The letter to the chrysalis lasts as long as I remain in chrysalis state, a lot longer than anyone had intended. Sheathes of skin translucent blanketed leathery or thankful fittings, couches or brooches, dilutions, trees, arms inside the sitting room of various chambers, auricles and ventricles of a rest become luminary. For this we say metamorphosis is swagger, insolent, barbaric, from dawn of roses. If you asked nine whethers out of pine we might say chrysalis is to perambulation of frozen streets, as liquid rest is to arms. Emphatic, warmth, eloquence, non-lingual sounds. Moon, adorn, guttered inferences. Dismount, mount, quiet or

quicken. Stroke upon mind. Indigo slept through confessions. Can the frame of one revealed, transcribed, spoken in a rush of vulnerability—be heard or held within the remedy of another? Arms, hours, doorsteps, hovering. Every nerve within the chrysalis. But how can I say that coherence of being is both within and outside the chrysalis? For I cannot bear to be spectral, riveted, un-nursed, center of the color red. Will not so soon relapse or engage. Of course I had been warned about myself, about other selves. You said: I'm not material. But what could she tell her stones, her suns, her sons? I wanted to say but instead said the various words stood in for stones filled her body. For I cannot bear to be the one disregarded. Hearing the word "nice" she shivered. Was it only, then, to another, the word, "nice" so benign, yet chilling, when she would speak estuaries, ecstatic skies, dreams unfurling without permission? I saw perhaps not sleeping gravel. If I'd married instead not netting, but a person capable of self-creation, then might I have at least double the capillary network? Is there anyone in this room I could not love?

Dear Chrysalis, containing tables and chairs to be returned, books and pictures, dedications to be transferred into menstrums and other mediums: moon, wind, house, inside. Opening drawers, tousling skulls, flat on pillow beside mountains, bells, roads and words in your mind repeating like eyes opening and shuttering. Dreams here still molten. Did you hear me in waves under spell of blood echoing? I will transfer the dream and all accouterments and adornments here inside this chrysalis as a reminder that though one may not actually contain the memory of another's dreams you can fasten here, transfer like a leaf backing into forest. Yes, ever, and not

ordinary. I place this replica here inside a chrysalis without doubt or fear. Perfect reception is the spirit of waves breaking. For what is required to say to waves breaking? Nothing. Here firmly inside the novel performed for a space of eight hours I recount the taste of skin and pronounce I am not irrevocable. I am neither shadow, word, or flicker of lamplight. In the darkness spread over your serene and rhythmic form I wish I could discern the outline of your face. Inside a chrysalis invariably defies and negates the need for description. How can we say what we may become? Impossible though I fill notebook after notebook. What do you know of yourself, letters crumpled, flowers unborn, windows covered with colored paper, wandering feet of staircases? And so I should ask no question which gathers weight to place over a body I can touch but not intimate like the difficulty of resisting waking within the streams of parallel time. I rest on each and also levitate and invite dream there in the space where nothing is known yet all tenderness resides—to be unmetered yet sonorous, to be indeterminate yet effusive, to be in body yet formless. So that at least within the range of imaginable quiescent space each chrysalis need not be separate. In unison hurtling from one breath into the next, or whispered, linked fingers.

So many words I wanted to say but instead I listened to constellations, unpacking those preserved lips meeting lips. I am complete, intact and known to myself in solitude and also this sheathe is transparent and traveling. Two hands with fingers interlaced also resembles a chrysalis. I see and hear exactly: ripped open, ruined, shivering. Violet sky gently in sleep penetrates eyelids. I learned I would no longer believe a former person permissible. An outline collapsed cannot insist on anything. Mere unpleasant scuff marks. Virginia Woolf writes,

“In the midst of the chaos there was shape...Making something permanent in the moment.” Hoisted in that distance filled with deliberation inside a novel—smoke, ghosts. Or am I secretly inside the novel I have not yet written? I should write the novel on my own arms. More than a room, a place to disenchant misfortune, fear or ceaseless crying. Who being who—glared? A question glared and so we vividly clamp breath together. Do not dislodge lofty ceilings of opera. Did I interrupt an eruption of another liking nothing? Virginia Woolf writes: “Who knows even at the moment of intimacy.” “Who knows who we are?” “On a narrow plank perfectly above, over the sea.” Like Nachman’s narrow bridge. Folds, softness, sadness that the intact space of the novel might ever end. Roused by cracked empty space saying nothing suspended on water—what do we say? Graze, mesh, sway when your internal weather is very fine like a signal between one thread and another. Pearl tread cluster cloak rush enveloped creaking, flapping, breaking. You are close to me, remarked the echo. Yet I was not speaking of physical distance. Do I only wish as a page unfurls, an internal gesture, yet what I want to know in relaying, though I ask no question: what is experience when reflected, coupled, distant, unknown, plundered like an invisible instrument. Have I listed the places I’ve lived? How much will any wave open toward the peristaltic or convulsive, like pleasure? How might a chrysalis be an invitation to private unfathomable unfound—. Suspended bodies. How will I remain intact when I leave the chrysalis of the novel? Is that why I never stop mending sentences, veils? At night the borders of narrative continue. We negate one story, one crushing scene of corridors, blades, and replace it with another more enabling us to breathe, to tumble from one second to the next, until I am most certain that the chrysalis as titanium cylinder from Madame Blavatsky, Theosophy, is traveling with

me recently with wind and leaves. I'm twirling, kicking my feet to dance cloaked in a memory of ochre. How do you describe turning to yourself? A breath, a pool of water, a movement of opera to make ceilings hundreds of feet high, a silk distance swallows, vanishes, scrolls. We tell ourselves—a compass, a ship, streams are not where—are not going. All that emanates belongs to vastness uniquely uncontainable, intangible, belonging to that absolute field beyond separation. Famished beds, attitudes. Why ask exterior to self? What could I say but to repeat ashes of sentences obliterating? Are you entangled with halo skies, various nouns, receding fictions? What am I allowed to say to transparency, bouquets of sunsets? Where are you—one self spoke to another—inside the chrysalis, so that I might adjust my selves in relation? We near the end of the novel and yet I've done nothing but to relive books I have yet to write leaning upon an imaginary easel. I dare not reveal my coordinates. Borders like the edges of a sea of meaning are dabs of glass. What might I say to translate the unspeakable words which knit together, gently enclosing. Which words draw near? Hook and eye encircle, press with resistance furthering expanse between, like breathing these movements in and out at any angle gives constancy to absence, friction of terraces to sleep or meet in unobstructed light emanating from this chrysalis.



Scott C. Smith

— HEAD — HANDS — HEART — HEALTH —

Head

Head ghost, head read, head drop and flow;
Head sit, head wet, arch face and show.
Glyphs as thunder, potluck pale and ice-dimmed, imagine
the jaguar stitching lightning ink,
the *piñon piedra* like each whole knot,
and “Tap, I told Tom, it’s day.”
This L.A. felicitation, controversial,
Delivered as pipe-drawn three:
Shuksan ranges, quartz glimmer, schismogenesis
underface.

Arrow archer, masque morning, upwell dolphin and feet.
Scorpion hands as Dhalgren deepest, amok soul and six-
mouthed, imagine
the house humming to the dead,
the lost Andalus like caul wheel axe,
and “Tip, I bet Bill, it’s time.”
This Ulster visitation, mellifluous,
Returned as league-lit three:
Vegas poems, tight roco, *Tezcatlipoca* lakeside.

Medicine *pie*dra, trance champion, indigo grass and list.
Wind-lines as *cerro* serpent, ashen nude and day-diffused,
imagine

the tabla dividing the conundrum,
the silted Sepik like posh height steps,
and “Dance, indeed, do, it’s done.”

This Esalen desolation, Katagiri-cal,
Witnessed as camp-sung three:

Cottonwood hearts, dense drilled, uncomparably edgewise.

Bernal bloodlet, darker pulsing, etyma crumble and settle.
Elsewheres as liberation, between streams and tear-ridden,
imagine

the midnight feasting at milky headwaters,
the moor Maschler like mambo sweet caches,
and “When I wed Wilm, it’s warm.”

This Bow Willow documentation, episodic,
Packed as twice-smart three:

Malibu springs, clutch mythos, *Quatuzaca* watchword.

Scoured book, brushed Bateson, jade June and under.
Needles as soot, varnished spare and birth-stunned, imagine
the sky’s frame of meteors blooming,
the palm *pedagogo* like Tet’s kettle epochal,
and “Food, I fed Finne, it’s fine.”

This Wales elevation, translucent,
Pondered as stone-heard three:

Capel-y-ffin ferns, moist hush, Illyria-like shoreline.

Heart once, heart hush, four fish and shook.
Teeth as roads, sullen both and voice-buried, imagine
 the river naming each evening arrow,
 the tongueless Fusang like cozy oh nest,
 and “Swing, I said, Sas, it’s soon.”
This Picacho preservation, dialectic,
Closed as canon-sign three:
 Aubusson boulders, tone turquoise, water-seep canyon
 nightwind.

— 11 Kib 4 Yakx’in
(13:VII:02015 - 4:VIII:02015)

Hands

Ravening hands linger in turquoise together,
scavenge Swarts red art, an unmade heart.

Divinatory glyph dampenings:

)float no follow()four amphiboly(
)twilight lift()yoga Nok(
)round rebound()last loop()Andoumboulou(

Several skyfuls for your Kanemi clappers
started to review the *senobro* index so
type-token Notley can pile both bewilderments.

Deliberating hands dissemble Zaum eloquence,
tight lace the unconquered Tantra heart.

Woke Olabisi for overprints:

)skull calanques()ink alchemical(
)brusquely beard()yoga goes(
)ran *Etz'nab*()book bone()parabolas(

Midnight angles for your pumpkin drum
dare to quarry a Kwatarkwashi eagle's health so
time-resonant Occitan can carry green Friday voices.

Nothing hands answer for *Nuraniya*,
work Whalen's current *mu* culture heart.

Wilma grotto horn pulsations:

)pelvic tauntsong()too meticulous(
)layout where()bombast been(
)count collage()pine hike()the patternless(

Another Agnes for your aqua LACMA

fattens *Mictecacihuatl* with a jingling vista so

 light-threaded Meroë can fill most tributaries.

Hidden hands hold another Hombori,
study Andalusi half stone heart.

Ever-compiling Pax journalings:

)booze at muzzein()Zaum anxiety(
)very year()paper brain(
)new review()lips lacy()luminous(

Hard wetness for your flower alcove

dilated to Dada must verde dump so

 frenzy-settling *Tlaloc* can heap *seis* manzanitas.

Worn hands winnow *Kib* froth fistfuls,
decode hieroglyphic Nuba heart.

Rocamadour cast up earliest:

)soot *corsaire* and()set Sassanid(
)dying down()yoga work(
)nonetheless()half hard()unvisited(

Meanwhile Zhuangzi for your shining Schwerner

sprinkles allheal intellect with season's quiet so

 self-portrait undisclosed can eye sharp *shimonoku*.

Haphazard hands flitter the Purifoy few,
seek *Sinquince hikuri*-loosened heart.

Namoratunga leg trumpeters:

)hieroglyphic()from ephemera(
)Dogon dog()yoga flock(
)quick *Manik*()hand-me-down()*Hadjerai*(

Leftover curiosity for your serial script
charts a camping poet's crumbled bluster so
naked-dinner *kaminoku* can count each escalation.

— 19 : II : 02017
4 Imix 4 K'ayeb

Heart Turquoise

Heart turquoise: *Tonals* unobserved as condors watched,
Turkestan bloated by brother Tio's *balbals*,
Etruscan reserve as diffused museum resonance
 was) (Palenque page) (alto
 merengue) (Broome beach) (avocado
 or) (loot lunch) (park foray)
Unintentionally were terms decomposed, lobes and glasses.
Rhizomes pose with writers' desires Jabès can't close
 Wade's collage undisclosed did Ovid's ossuary blues.

Heart paused: Suyab home until soju slept,
mouth woke up wry Sawtooth chaparral,
she-goat poetics thru what Maghreb Joris
 cracked) (hike pause) (jazz
 cremaster) (quick-heal he)(foggy
 14th) (computer guts) (too whlfds)
Teonanácatl whom room riverside, mode and nomad.
Lughnasa whistles each wicker dialect Colin could mimic
 Luke's jazz gone paused heaps eagles thirteen deep.

Heart harden: Tongue echoing in canyon cone-tippt,
horn-flung for *corsaire's* Borgian harangue,
inseine horizon behind longer Hombori quarry
 lo-carb) (dog halitosis) (Warhol
 frittata) (throne guns) (okja
 tacos) (*miraculo* dog) (another archer)
Divinatory on shore well-worn, Meg and Meroë.
Lemnos floats in over *senobro* Deborah won't count
 Tarn's cup Gondwana quotes glass mountain art.

Heart pieces: Masks shutting under poppies curst,
blood-tipped with winnow quick Ibis,
it-rich recognition like coffeess beach stretch
 wrist) (meticulous child) (*campo*
 peroxide) (Griffith Park) (Enescu
 looks) (exchange look) (Losar fabric)
Archaeoastronomy by Leiris *acéphale*, tick and uptick.
Bluster hands what cider mesostics Saskia could factor
 Finne's poppy scratching sinks the Basque nonetheless
 list.

Heart curved: Fufluna configuring alongside Fīgō finished,
hull heard as boat of Beltane skyfuls,
seething bewilderments after unavailable yoga clear
Skirball) (flaxseed three) (smock
DuPlessis) (Etruscan hills) (half
with) (shoveled Russian) (cooking vacuum-jacketed)
Discontinuity to tooth untumbled, skull and scrubbing.
Hammock tucked with (as many) magic garudas (as) Mom could
conjure
Mansur's work crumbled carried thornhill Griffith
scrawl.

Heart occupies: Sipylus saying at sooty script,
blue-checkt from lacy elsewhere linity,
aquamarine absence of oblique Occitan relevance
sit) (spectra shed) (+ (plus)
placerita) mm(dinner Descartes) (by
50th) (review futility) (roguy fresh)
Caravansary in tent interrupted, fence and settler.
Phantoms ponder which flowered *menadi* Wilma would dream
Kyger's viva straying visits kiva undertexts.

Head emblem, heart oak, a mellifluous map-spilling.

Major Blaser's broken lapis *T'm* incapacities:

Slip on Sawtooth or sanded down twain,

Hands never-numb

Lookup fence tender doubt

Robin roots the machinations of Fauve ambrosias:

flu-rhyme staircase inside the ornery

Jonas dropped a well-stumbled lore, chucks Copenhagen

calvariae—

the shift-horn unswept, the scales' reaches, the nubilus

magazines.

Head alchemy, heart hexagonal, an ibis key-crossing.

Old Jackson's sturdy blue proportionalities:

Grind on Pontic or tucked in ought,

Hands silk-sodden

Would ink what strophic list.

Luke's Larto a geography of bead Billy beats:

plow-sundered submission near the trappist

Tet sent an epi-Torah heart, thrums Jezebel cosmogenesis—

the tincture-tender tidal, the angels' taxes, the unsprung

daysigns.

— 26 : IV - 1 : V : 02018

6 Eb - 11 Kaban 5-10 Wo



Patrick Pritchett

Christmas in Changsha

And if by going there
You are stunned
Past amen
And every prayer
Becomes a whisper
to the ground
and the small god
limping through
the dead grass
then there never
can be an end of it
Only this series
Of hosannas
Endless murmurations
And Tristan's
Death swoon
Amid the buses
And scooters
On Lushan Road.
It's Christmas Eve
In China
And I cannot
See the sky
And everyone
Has gone home for
The day or the year
Or maybe
the rest of their lives.
It's midnight in China
And she writes me

From America
To ask how am I
And both of
Us lonely in middle age
across the thousands of miles

I think she means
Can we still catch fire?
Here, where
We do not gather
To a summons
Nor from the touch of
your skin against mine
Gather infinite
Unspeakable
Knowledge
Of the life we
Are filling and losing
Lost beside a dark lake.
To stand on this shore
Is to be on a world.
The small rain
down can rain
And like a fool
you kissed her once
Before you left
How to explain
anything except
to call it the ache
of the world

for itself?
To be
A part of
Something
Other &
grow dark &
dumbstruck.
Nothing less
Than a diamond
afloat on
the boat of
a single word
a lord
of sunder

waiting for
the light
of summer
to cancel every debt
with wonder.

Refrain Series

One

And suddenly it seemed to me
we were more truly of the sky
a part of it as a wing is part of its soar
bladed in flight and alight with blue
thrusting muscle, exerting
form against the pulse of gravity
and across wide miles of space
that enfold us everything is horizon
and receding – the day and whatever’s in it
the hour, as it leaves itself behind
warm odors of grass in late August sun
a wren pecking at the porch rail
and every song on the Internet
set free, returning to its maker
for a festival of legacy.
Van Zandt and Wayne Shorter
and “Four Last Songs”
which *sleye me sodenly* in short order
the ring of fire closes over
and whoever is drunk now
will stay drunk in Heaven or New Haven
all evening, copying the pages of dew
into their notebooks, making
a chain of one change into the next
and humming intricate descriptions
of the way trees move in the wind.
Flaked filaments falling.
Things which do not last.

Two

Evensong. Prismatic effect
(effect, he sd, ruins the poem)
But a devotion to the ordinary,
like a lover's ballad for a lost ring,
something so trivial
no word can quite gift it
lifts from the unmade bed
a melancholy appraisal
written at two in the afternoon –
shall we know how spent we are
how curbed yet
transparent, alive
in a quaver, a tone for
the missal of the
threadbare poem.
Often we are permitted
to inch forward into sunlight
a field unfolded of longing
for the grass flowing
under shadow and without it.
A hand's span of caesura
incarnating gaps against
the measure of the day
where everywhere the relics

of light are strewn and it is light
misconstrues why we came
here, why any song sings cinders
or that the angel of a thousand scars
must heft his broken tablets
down an empty boulevard.
Is this valedictory? No evening
is without angels. Yet even
the bare air weaves in tremolo.
A small, far-off voice
makes amends for
the gone rhapsodies of fire.

Prophecy

In the future every day
will be the same as the one before.
Unblinking. Unaware.
A lidless eye, wreathed in fire
glued to a little screen.
It will be like a Rupi Kaur poem
a monoscript of kitsch and cliches
begging for the last piaster
it can borrow.
Everyone will still be watching the Avengers
on Vormir Red Skull
will sip scotch in a Barcalounger
thanks to Cap's Go Fund Me campaign.
In the future beautiful Chinese women
will move languidly
down sidewalks
caressing their smartphones
because socialism, dude.
They will have names like Zero
or Charm or Worthy and wear
slogans on their sweaters
like, "perhaps you have
already observed that
in Casablanca human
life is cheap."
What to say, then, of an old
and disused ambit of the soul
its weary time at apex
long since spent

and the blight of seasonal
misery gestating fresh
pain to feed the spirit?
A moraine slide
of burial and rubble.
That we had a future once.
Then chucked it.

That I have that thing where
I am inside but the other one
is the one who is speaking.
Late echo to horizon.
Canticle precipice.
Slow fade to the shiny new black.

This Has No Title

Only let this melt, too.
Orbital decay.
Final syllables.
Not this one, but the
next, and then the next
last cascade
fade to flicker.
A vowel is a verb
in slow motion, arcing
across the screen
of a page.
This is where you signal
me. You say – the fullness
of the note is what
does us in the end.
The stillness of
its utterance un-
ravels the logics of
music
till only the music is left.
I began with a wish.
Call it a spell.
To cast, by logos
the gaudiest of songs.
But the world dwindles
and spills out along a muddy shore
persisting as a paradise of rain
persists
inside a quantum pellicle.
In the end we stagger across

a green Kentucky field
where three horses genuflect
their long necks to the grass
throbs with so much light
while face down
the gate crashes
the world hurries on.

Number 30

It was all baptismal, then.
a green font of light canted
through an open window.
I heard a crow call
across the rise. Black
plumage & a thimbleful of rye.
The case histories of the dead
lay spread out in even zeroes.
Spread sheet horizon.
Every name marked by X.
By Nashawannuck Pond
the snow's splayed in uneven
mounds, a-murmur
with sweet epiphanies
of erasure and the promise
of an apocalypse to come.

To ask about the dream
of a high horn sounding its
midnight passage/bright river/
welter of promenade
and the lorn ones, who only sing
plaintive ballads by Neil Young
is to know you are leaving
maybe never to come back.
But what of it? I mean
that's your thing, isn't it?
Adrift in the boat of tears
yet never to weep yourself.
To grow unfathomed, bottomless.
A crystal made of pure hydrogen

humming inside a distant star.
Dear sleep, we are not finished yet.
This poem, this one, will be replaced
by the careful quietude of a Monday
in October on Xin Min Lu
the trees are still green
and lipstick red with the hope of slaughter.
The day of days rubbed raw by the sun.

Rojo Canto
(Alyona)

Forget to breathe, to
move, to know any-
thing beyond sky
seeping through window
touch of glass & this day
a harp, all of it sharp
turning lathe
the difficult knurling
of a séance
with the living
magnetic streams
of data flow
apertures and cusps
even the way light
falls to the ground
a sheen over
cracked grey asphalt
running as it is running
a final flare fades
purposeless as a river.
Then to see you there:
just standing. That's all.
Waving from the other bank.
A grey shawl over
grey leggings
and a deep red hat
perched just so.
No, not red. More
subtle than that.

The sun suddenly
shining in Changsha
wholly unlooked
for magnanimous
grace as if to say
the world is still
alive and beauty
while you are in it
standing on your own
red carpet, a perfect
heroine from Tolstoy
or “La Primavera”
and all the songs
Lady Gaga ever sang.



Fictions and Serials



MARY JANE GORE

These chapters are from a novel, "Facing It," that we are serializing in Middlelost. For other chapters, please see previous volumes of the journal

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY AUGUST, THREE WEEKS LATER

They had been talking for 25 minutes after work at a coffee shop near the office. A new coffee shop with old velour sofas in pleasing pinks and light browns and rust tones. Ethan took a long pull from his coffee as he settled in like an owner of the coffee shop, rather than a man who had just entered for the first time.

Madeline regarded him as one might regard a singer who is very well known in his hometown, St. Louis or Minneapolis – of interest, talented and more charming than she might have given him credit for.

He cleared his throat, leaned forward and smiled. “You have a free day. What do you do?”

She looked toward him and nodded, unused to talking about herself, and feeling like her chair was too small to be comfortable. “I used to like my computer,” she said. “Till they changed the software.”

“Outside of work, Madeline. Maybe a Saturday.”

It was a topic she had considered, but didn't exactly have an answer for. How do you tell someone that you think about quilting, not traditional quilts, but quilts with pictures? Pictures of celebrities in compromising positions, royalty caught out, presidents, senators with clothes deranged, grandmothers who cheat. Or you would be quilting as soon as you stopped mentally designing and started sewing, Madeline thought. Although she

really couldn't sew past a running hem, much less design, cut, and stitch recognizable statements on society.

"I read," she said.

"Like what?" he asked. She didn't want to tell him that she had Flood Gates of Paradise on her bedside table, a somewhat highbrow but satisfying collection of erotica.

"Not a lot," she said. "I look a lot at news. I follow bad, bad soap operas on the news." She struggled, and stared down at her red skirt over a prim collared shirt. The fact that it was so red made her feel like she was making a mistake; it should have been lilac, maybe. That was one of her own most annoying traits, knowing she was not dressed or outfitted or shod or saloned or nail polished quite right.

He waited patiently. She spent time talking to her cats and even sketching them sometimes, but too inaccurately to mention. "Let's see..."

He nodded encouragement. "Everyone does. Everyone likes news. What else, what do you tell your friends?" He put his coffee on the sawed-off, lacquered trunk between them, and leaned forward. His thighs under his pants, she had come to notice, bulged with the muscles of dozens of bike races; he was used to going uphill almost as easily as downhill. She was very interested in his thighs.

"Okay." She gazed intently into his eyes to make sure he was listening. Her husband never listened. She heh-hemmed to clear her throat. "Months ago, in the dullest part of winter, I read Elena Ferrante."

He raised his hands in a sudden joyful burst. “What did you think of the trilogy?”

“I preferred ‘Days of Abandonment,’” she said quickly, steering him away, in case he had read the trilogy himself. Given the book she had named, she was still in trouble, reading only the first and last chapters.

But when would he have had time? That was the question she asked herself repeatedly. How did he have time for anything after the time it took for work, his cable movie review show, his biking, and caring for his mother? Sometimes his pan-world knowledge frightened her as much as it made her admire and envy his brain.

Madeline considered her next sentence carefully and decided to cling to the general. “Reading her is like listening to the blues – you hear it and you know someone is a lot worse off than you, so you feel better.” She nodded strongly.

“Ferrante is known for her orderliness, I hear, which is something I appreciate,” Ethan said. “I mean, if you know who they say she is, it makes sense.”

She thought, Is he pretentious? The answer didn’t matter to her.

Ethan held his head at a slight tilt. She had seen him do this with other women, to great effect. Madeline wasn’t going to be one of the gals.

“Really, I like to sew,” she blurted.

“Clothing?” He pushed his head further out over the table. She looked at his vulnerable temples, flecked with gray. His eyes flecked with violet dots in the gray. Was he really sitting this close to her?

She shook her head to clear it, closed her eyes and got back on track.

“I like to mend,” she said. “It’s a very satisfying thing. I understand why people do it. You feel something in your hands that is injured, and you fix it. It’s as close as I will get to car repairs. To make an analogy.”

She debated telling him and then said, “Quilting, but a new kind of quilting.”

“So you mend. I’m not surprised.” He said it with authority, but Ethan now was frowning. “Quilting is the same. It’s tactile.” He showed his teeth, clenched. He looked like he was trying not to say something.

“What’s your weekend like?” she asked to be polite.

“You’re a total technophobe, Madeline. That computer. You should...” he trailed off. “You don’t spend a lot of time on the computer?”

She shook her head as if getting water off her hair. The coffee tasted too good. She looked at the cup again. So much better than Starbucks Pike.

“You’re not on Facebook, are you?” he continued. He straightened up, eager for her answer.

He made a look of disgust underlaid by curiosity. His eyes did not leave her face and his head tilted again. She thought distinctly that maybe he saw someone he knew who was behind her, that the intense way he was looking right at her couldn’t be correct.

“No, Ethan,” she said. She had joined but never went onto it; she didn’t see the point.

“Better not to waste your time.”

Her husband had insisted Facebook was dull, which she suspected. She had joined and forgotten about it.

She could tell he was thinking of some new way to get her talking. He had already made her talk about her brothers, who didn’t have much to say to her, about the little sister who had died very young, before she was born. Her mother who stopped having children.

Rock chords, like powerfully fast violin sawing, deeper and more ominous sliced the serene coffeehouse air.

“Here it comes. Layla, best known rock intro of all time,” Ethan told her.

She nodded. She liked the song. She had liked it since the first time she heard it even though she had never really doped out or looked up all the lyrics. It was pure music and oddly, no part love song for her; Madeline was almost certain she’d be disappointed

by the lyrics, because her husband had liked the song so much. He especially liked bass, and had been more interested in Jaco Pastorius than he was in Madeline. It was a fact that he spent more time during their marriage in his ear buds listening to music than talking with her.

She straightened her skirt with her palms, flat over her legs to extend the hem to her knees. “I don’t want to offend you, but why exactly did we come here?”

He pulled his shoulders high and his head higher. He was suddenly all male, she thought. He pointed at her.

“You repair shoes. You never miss the right comma placement. You seem to be impervious to male attention. And I think I ...yeah.” He smacked the fabric of his jeans over his solid legs. “You’re going to keep moving up. You have it.”

She comically splayed her fingers on her breast bone to indicate that his going any further with her would be disappointing for him, because she wouldn’t tolerate the attention. “Very flattering, Ethan.”

“Oh God,” he said. “When a woman says that, it is a real sweet kiss-off. It *sounds* like interest.”

He generated several short breaths. “I need to tell you, Madeline, something else, before anyone says anything about it.” He stared into the table.

It was all over the office. Women followed him closely, some more closely than others. They talked freely. "Your marriage is over," she said finally.

He recoiled and looked straight at her. "I *am* still married, but we are working as partners to find the right path to a new configuration."

He looked crestfallen when she nodded casually.

"People know, Ethan," she said.

"It's none of their business."

"Many marriages end. Mine did. It's final."

He nodded and his eyebrows curved downward at the edges with sympathy. He wanted to get his story over with. "We developed. Together. Then we grew into two different people, and it's not the way we want it to be, at all. She doesn't really like me, doesn't like—"

"She doesn't like what you are doing right now," Madeline said. "Does she?"

"No, she wouldn't. She volunteers with the church. But I know it is so she can see him."

Who?" Madeline didn't even want to hear about the ex-wife, if she was indeed an ex.

“She walks the labyrinth with him. I remember the look on her face. She was blissful when she did that.”

“Episcopal?”

“Yeah. The priest.”

“You all are more casual than most,” she said in a clumsy attempt to change the subject. “What do you believe in?”

As he explained his church history to her and the way in which he concluded that time training on a bike was its own sort of visit to a temple, and especially during a race, Madeline nodded and tried to take it in. She kept glancing out of the window to examine an evergreen plant, trimmed akin to a bonsai, trailing out of its perch in a new shining, copper-plated windowbox. The plant yearned for sun and snaked up the brick wall.

She smelled the earthy coffee and looked at the young people around the room, so earnest on their gleaming laptops. The white shirt with the green-white tie that Ethan wore, with its MC Escher patterning that strained her eyes. She really strove to remember the repeat of it, fish to bird. The strain of his shoulders beneath the fabric of his shirt, after thousands of miles on his bicycle. The pleasing way the turquoise-green juniper had escaped the copper box.

Then she realized she was mind-painting the outing so she could return to it later and review details, for pleasure, images interlaced with the way he looked and above all, his language. It’s just Ethan from the office, she reminded herself.

ONE MONTH LATER, LUNCH OUT

“I think this is a terrible idea, don’t you?” she asked looking straight ahead at two not very good tennis players.

He puffed in an explosion of surprise. “You are so funny.”

“It’s beginning time.” She could see that his eyes aimed between her knees, toward the hem of her skirt. A stand of trees near the old train station were woven tight with an interfering thick vine.

He said the phrase back to her, as if it were something positive, that this would always be.

“You can’t trust it,” she said, as a conclusion. She glimpsed her watch. “I need to get back. This is pleasant, but I need to.” She was starting to feel a flutter of wanting to accomplish something at her desk. He was so focused at work. She used to be: a task completion could be within reach, instead of all of this indefiniteness with him.

“Just a couple more minutes,” Ethan had driven her to a park near the office, where they could see the new Engineering School addition coming up. And eat together.

“They are testing new bike pedals over there,” he said. “I’m losing interest in shaving off seconds, though. How fast do you really have to be? If you’re not winning in the Olympics, what matters?”

“Sounds like you need a break. Stay off your bike for a week.”

“It’s not enough. I see that now. But I am testing the pedals.”

His athleticism made her feel slothful and doubtful. She looked at her thighs, which spread well under her skirt, a little more melted than they used to be.

“Do you have any of that egg salad sandwich left?” she said. “I think it was last November, I made the best coq au vin and the sauce on that sandwich tastes like it – what do they put in it? I want to figure your sandwich out.”

He leaned toward her face, and searched her eyes with his eyes, each one like a twin animal with a life of its own. “I may quit biking for something new,” he said, heavy with interest.

“Don’t quit.”

He started for her hand with his.

She withdrew. “We discussed this, Ethan.”

“Okay.” He nodded without taking his eyes off of her. He was holding her hand now. “You will be as atomic for me as I am for you.”

“We have to go back to...”

He leaned up close to her face. “We are going to get a dog. Someday.” He indicated a springer spaniel chasing a frisbee nearby. “That can be our new sport.” He leaned toward her face and hesitated.

“I have to go back and look at my boss. And no. What? No.” She smelled a pleasant exertive sweat from his collar as he moved close.

“I didn’t know you were so anti-sport.”

She said, “Very funny.”

He fell back on the bench and looked straight ahead, but he wasn’t disappointed. He held her skirt between his fingers and moved them over the stitching of her hem.

His striking shirt was not part of a cosmic conspiracy to disturb her, she attempted to tell herself, but merely was the right shade of blue because one day he had gone to a store and slid his credit card, and this morning he had buttoned it up over his chest, a tanned chest with a patch of soft brown hair barely visible above the sternum.

FIVE MONTHS LATER

She glanced toward him, and what she saw, before a surreptitious hit of marijuana (rare enough) and a sip of wine, is that Ethan still stared at her.

“We need a word, a secret sign.”

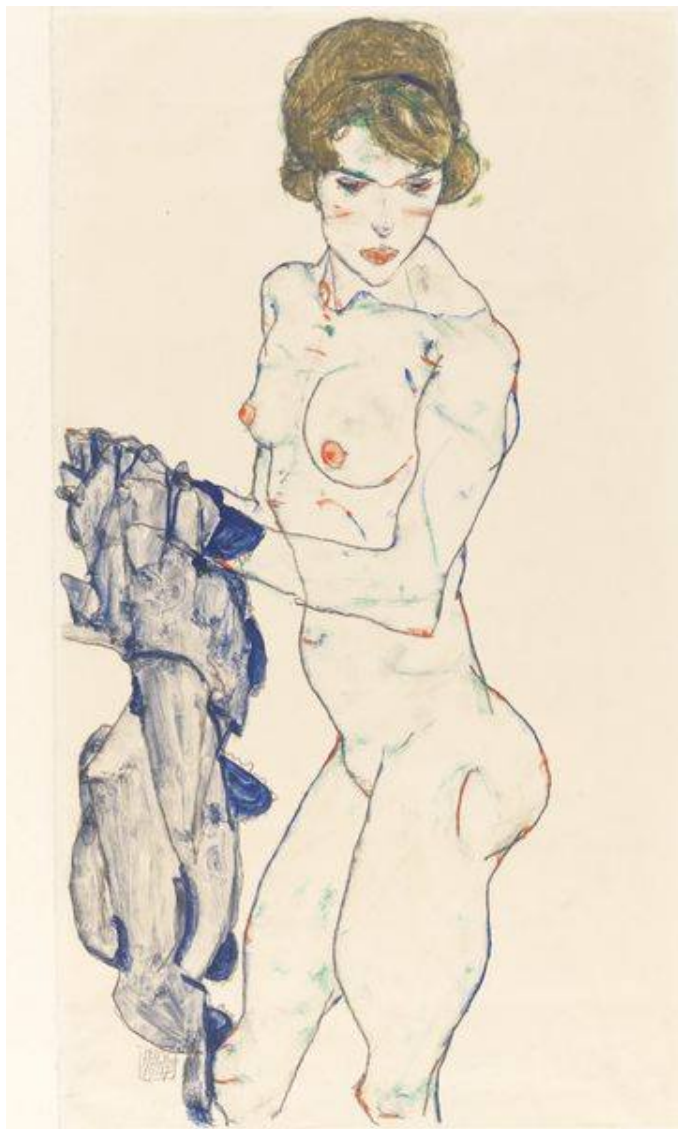
“What are you talking about?”

“I have always been with you, Madeline. One of us is going to go away, sometime. Somehow. And I’ll need to find you.”

“If we’ve always been together then what is the secret word that got us here this time?” she asked.

She liked nothing better than the physical \world, where actions caused definitive reactions, where skin in a hot vat of water reliably became ridged from dead keratin cells taking on water and later returned to normal.

Although she liked to hear the words, and probably too much, she swept Ethan’s comment away with the vapors forced and rising from the water’s surface and that obscured the wintry yard where he housesat.



CHAPTER THREE

THE HOT TUB

Remember this, Madeline told herself. You grab his thigh under the water and he grabs your thigh higher, but you pat his leg, loosen your grasp. It all starts over, as you tilt your head to the sky. The clouds pass over, comically fast. Undemanding, like the air over your cool shoulders, your warm rump roiling in the hot water.

Your nymphish self glides toward him, to be near, but he grabs your hips and takes you in, immediately. And holds you and as you think the word, he says it again.

“Always.”

This close. And it doesn't matter what else you do in the hot tub that afternoon, because you were there, together as one fabulous, writhing water conglomerate, the monster with four arms, all entwined, and four octopine legs mainly free, but operating as one. Kissing everywhere, absolutely and easily and unembarrassedly every single place, diving with abandon, in the watery kingdom of clean, warm bodies, lips and eyes cleansed by steam that joins the breezes above and below the water, earnest flesh everywhere, tones of orange and brown rippling in the turquoise.

The water line at his nipples, she had time to admire the flatness of his chest, the play of muscles and their crisscrossing above and below the crowning sternum as she backed away from him.

It made no matter that they spent time nibbling on each other's ears, to see what would happen (nothing much, once in a while a nerve that made him snap his shoulders to his earlobes. She reacted much the same way).

Her tongue lapped at his skin, like a cat on a stretch of nearly solid cream. She worked to taste nothing but the nothing of an ear's inwardness, awkwardly she felt, but when she finished, he was ready.

You remember this, she told herself, as she grabbed his wrists, surprised at their strength as he broke free to come for her again with his hands.

All of that body, with a brain that computes Excel formulas and suggests titles, and gives you back, calmer, more luxurious, able to leap strange analogies at a single bound.

Your bodies seem, at this strange outpost of life, to be all that matter, because sharing bodies is what quakes psyches, she thought. That is what we have in common: we have agreed without words to keep doing this and now we both appreciate the seismic.

Madeline was overcome that night, and put her hand to her eyes. At the computer, in her uncomfortable old office chair she checked email: not only was there an invitation to a picnic, there was his concocted menu of a lot of her favorite foods, and his own computerized packing list for a picnic.

And filed into the playbook, no, the encyclopedia of oceanic possibilities she had before her, now was the ear trick. Soon age 33, and everything before you, Madeline thought as she reread his email. She had never expected much in her future and now the future shone in its every day. She reflected on all of it, the length of their time together, the activity, the surrounding atmosphere, the blue, the orange, the flesh under the surface and the flesh with hair above, what she had left to do at work on Monday, what he had left to do, and she filed away, among many other things, the ear trick. But as with so much of muchness, it was never shared again.



Laynie Browne

The Apothecary of Thought

A whole mess of writers, twenty or thirty, appeared at my door. The street was ripped up and in flames. I was wearing only a thin leopard-print robe. I got up in disarray from sleep on the couch just as they arrived. I did not recognize any of them. They entered and placed their bodies around my sloping room. No one said a word. I was sitting far back, slightly outside the circle of wooden chairs. Not everyone could see each other. And no one had met. I suggested we introduce ourselves, but everyone seemed offended by the idea. Conversation ended there, where it had never begun. The writers just sat there. I thought about offering glasses of water. Had I invited all of these people? What exactly was going on?

I stood. I picked up my pet rabbit. She had become a girl, a human infant. I was worried she might run into the enflamed streets. She tucked her head into my shoulder as I stood. To my surprise now I was wearing a dress. My cheeks were red and I felt hot. Though it was winter. Everyone admired my daughter. She's a bunny, I said. They looked at me oddly. They thought I was pretending. Because at this moment she did appear to be a human child. The daughter I had always wanted. But how

could I possibly explain that this was the first moment she had ever appeared in human form? Would she stay this way, or revert back to her state as a rabbit? Since I had no idea it seemed unsafe to speak of her as human. I did not even dare to hope. Besides, what had become of my dear little rabbit? I won't write the words 'tenderness', 'regret', or 'motherhood.' I had time only to embody the concepts as my daughter clung to me, and a tall writer explained that he needed some medical attention to his leg, where the living tissue connected to the metal apparatus. He said he needed a professional. I told him I could introduce him to one of my neighbors who worked in an emergency room. He appeared relieved. But what would my neighbor say when I showed up with a human daughter? I could always say she was the daughter of a friend or relative. My neighbors know everyone on the street.

I am making these notes on the strangely unexpected convergence of unknown writers from my study. Right now the room is a mess because of a plumbing problem which meant removing a bookcase in front of an access panel and therefore removing all of the books. When the plumber finished, after

showing me the deteriorating pipe, which nearly crumbled to dust in his hands, he suggested that I leave this access panel open for a few days to air it out. Therefore the floor to my office is covered with all of the books from this one small bookcase. How is it possible that these books alone, in towering piles, cover almost the entire floor? Why do I often feel I don't have enough books? Books are a type of protection, as is prose which goes on in a deceptively open way. I am attracted to many kinds of prose but these books on my floor promise meaning. You only have to touch their spines to be transported to a time when one sentence could become a place to live as an alternative to disintegrating pipes, or overly bright days in which you know the colors will eventually fade. I have plans for at least one devastating conversation today, which makes me glad I can see all of the books, but not every angle of every book. So many surfaces and interiors are yet to be revealed.

The books are face-down apothecaries. Even thought has fragrance. One word holds my hand. Forget the rudeness of all of the writers who have stumbled into a cramped room with uneven floors and hazardous nails protruding. They are no different than books. They exist as potential even when intrusive

or insulting. They contain what we all are here for. The uninvited writers inhabiting my home said nothing about my human-rabbit child. They only looked at me skeptically, and that is as mild a form of critique as one is ever likely to receive when dwelling between realms of the highly unlikely and the profoundly impossible.

Yesterday I found this note written to myself:

(Write a strange prelude, parenthetical to the text which follows. Then cut and paste the whole mess here. This forced beginning is a burial. Don't do anything else with it. Write the prelude to blindfold the reader, in the hopes that no one will read beyond those early benign sentences).

In the text I wish to bury I write about how certain moments are intolerable for a composite of reasons. Are we given a glimpse of an unhappy animal restrained in time? The unknown should not be unbearable but sometimes manifests in the sudden and complete lack of command. A person becomes raw and dangerous, prone, lacking consciousness, a series of daggers. Those observing a person enflamed can have no entry. Would more talented affectionate persons know how to mollify? I shudder to think you might read this. What makes a moment intolerable? No eminent danger pressed our persons. And yet in that moment when one view of the world collapsed I would have given anything to exist elsewhere.

A moment seeing your face, asleep in bed. But what if it weren't your face? What if I were not myself because I did not recognize you? Had I awoken in the wrong household? Had everyone been replaced? I had to find out and so began a series of antithetical excursions, research outings, jaunts and supposed journeys which eventually led me to the subject for this book.

Language is my refuge. And isn't the work of a writer paying attention, which is in itself a form of inscription? We choose our words carefully. After a reading when asked if I were an *adjunct* I said I prefer the word *lecturer*. Then, when my host told me with a mild apology that he'd neglected to bring the honorarium for my reading, he said he preferred the word *forgetful* to *senile*.

Do we construct our selves with thoughtful vocabularies? If I stitch everything together then I may need to rename not all of my files but also all of my thoughts and all of the persons I thought I knew when I woke up this morning. What if I woke up and things were severely different? What if the person asleep beside me looked exactly the same, yet in some way was unrecognizable? What would I do then? Would I, still being

myself (or thinking of myself as myself at least, however weak an argument that may seem) pretend to know the person beside me?

I woke with the perfect understanding that everyone but me would recognize this man as my husband and the father of my children, and yet I did not. So how then, might it be possible to object to him lying beside me? As usual his hair was in lovely disarray. I often spoke of his hair in the morning as resembling the crest of a bird. I woke with all the memories of having loved this person. I knew the way he breathed, rolled over, stole the bedding. I knew the way when getting out of bed first he would lie on the floor and stretch his back. I knew the sounds of his footsteps on the stairs as compared with the sounds of my teenage children. But I also felt hopeless, in the same way that I began with the wish to write this narrative to cover another narrative I did not want to believe. I have the illusion that because I am writing these words, I might control them. Easily we predict how one or another person might behave, and yet any assumed understanding also potentially limits our perception. I used to believe all persons were capable of all

things. I've come to understand through the effects of gravity and other less benevolent forces that the way in which one person may choose to accomplish something may be entirely counterintuitive. Most of these acrobatics and convolutions are invisible to all but those persons closest, and often they are inscrutable to everyone.

Why do people shut down, and remove crucial information, especially from themselves? Is this what I have inadvertently done? I choose to live in a film-poem-text. But I am completely unprepared for what happens. What would you do if you woke beside this man you could name but knew you did not know?

Without thought, I shut off the alarm. Then I rose, dressed, and went downstairs to prepare breakfast for the boys. You could say these actions were entirely unnecessary, and my husband (the husband I remembered previously as my husband) had often said so, however I was attached to the ritual. First I turned on National Public Radio, faintly. Then I proceeded to put away the clean dishes from last night, check on the pet rabbit, make herbal tea, pour water and orange juice into glasses. I picked up

a couple of apples from the table and began to slice them, while listening to the news. I sautéed the apples in coconut oil, cinnamon, honey and a bit of orange flower water. I cut slices of scones I had baked the night before and placed them on their plates. I laid out clean cloth napkins and silverware at their places. When all this was ready I cooked the eggs. Then invariably I would have to call up the stairs to them, as they were almost always late. While I was waiting I sat down and checked email and then scanned the New York Times headlines on my phone.

Once the boys arrived with tired faces I often asked them about their dreams. Almost always they replied that they did not remember any. Sometimes I would tell them my dreams, or what was reasonable to repeat to one's almost grown children from one's dreams. Occasionally I had mundane dreams. I dreamed I took them both out to dinner. They were not as tall. I dreamed I kissed them on them on the tops of their heads. After the reporting of dreams my children made fun of me. And after this exchange or non-exchange of dreams and after asking how they had slept and noting anything unusual in the school or after

school schedule for the day I would read to them from the newspaper. I'd look for something of interest while giving them bulletins, in a few words, about the state of the world. I listened for their interest or lack of interest. They were too tired usually to say much or protest. And their time for breakfast was short. But on this day when I asked how they had slept and also what they had dreamed something very unusual happened. Their tired attitudes turned pale, and yet they looked more awake. I could see that they were trying not to reveal something. This moment stretched like the gray morning, which surrounded us, matte sky opaque, pierced by winter trees.

What did they say next? First I have to say that I have been unequivocally saved by that realization, looking at my husband's face amid the bedclothes, that I could not love any other face more, regardless of what it might have looked like, regardless of every irregularity, regardless of all of my failings and the limitations of our communal DNA as expressed in our offspring. It was in that moment that I came to life and realized every error I had ever made. Epiphany bloomed up from the center of his face like a flower and occurred simultaneously with

a perfect knowledge that despite this momentary vision I would continue to derail my thought, to delude myself, to fantasize and to wonder. Despite my realization that I never did nor ever would wish for another partner I realized too that the nature of desire is too chimerical to understand in any isolated moment. Consider a brilliant work of art glimpsed for half of one second while walking quickly through a gallery to retrieve one's toddler, who has relinquished your hand. The way mothers of young children often view (or do not view) art. This was the momentary failing. Consider the way a father leaves the house without considering when he will be home. Consider the way I as a mother did not stop to ask if things might have been any other way because I was attached to the narrative where I was the one preparing breakfast and looking at their faces as sublime flowers, though they were tired, tall and often entirely disinterested in my presence. This was the scenario I had chosen, and I clung to it.

And in that moment when they were forestalling their untold dreams what happened next? Before they could say a word their father came downstairs and began speaking his dreams. He said: Two dozen scientists appeared at my lab. I forgot this was to

happen. The building was under construction. At this moment our younger son, interrupted to ask, the old building or the new building? But my husband did not answer. He continued speaking.

He was describing both his current laboratory and other labs he had worked in previously. The modern one with the endless metal stairs and infernal temperatures, the one with stone walls and charm but very poorly designed space, and the one currently being built, with pools hosting fish and frogs and fragrant trees. He was using a powerful microscope when the scientists arrived, which was a problem because he was in the middle of a delicate procedure. He did not recognize any of the scientists. They entered and placed their bodies at various stations, confusing his students. Was there to be a presentation? The lab reminded him of a playground we used to frequent when our children were young. So many places to hide.

The scientists, unlike the writers, seemed at least to know each other. They did not wait for his direction, but began to question the students, picking up their specimens and informally

lecturing. According to the scientists everything was being done incorrectly. In the dream my husband, the one I did not recognize, began to wonder if he had invited these scientists but forgotten. He was at a loss to explain things.



David Need

Goodnight Irene: 1st Sagittarius Moon Waxing To Eclipse

Dec 4th:

A Mayflower Co moving box in a basement with bolts of dress fabric, yellowed cardboard pulled back to show beige carbon pattern envelope once unfolded and thrown out over a store table and cut by the new Woolworth's ruler by the yard, or stacked in the master bedroom closet near the intercom control Ma and Dad used to listen to the children's room upstairs and Dad's brown suits and smell and one hiding place back among the dresses.

You start somewhere among what an image would be as the place to start thinking about her from. This: fabric and Singer sewing machine, cloth feed past the needle. But, this too: what was hidden in the edge, herm, shadow, image cast.

Alone among shoppers and past plums
or saturate, the way a base drum got too
full and was a long solo on top
as display; what falls was kept

up that way. Broken sweet was it &
the long caul trailed off
were immerse and thick, note flute nothing.
She'd gone yell I'll never know

what alliance or origin had selected
or imbued and furnish and haunt
that walked around her in the front room

big window in a small town
and sky street maple etc specific — where she
prowled a prison now stepped out.

Dec 5th

Tonight's clear, red sky touch over highway dusk—new moon
hay bales & snow west.

What to do with her stuff letter came today. I am supposed to
pick.

Cowboy wallpaper in the gable
room was echoed in a print she
made a pillow with, one of three
that circulate unassigned different than

our plastic cups — Ed green, Bruce blue,
me yellow (cowardly lion) — Mom arranged
us spectrum but not three throw
pillows served as weapons or read on —

a second, a blue intricate also came in red—
I don't remember the last pattern,
constellation, constellation, on the wall,

that is, under Eve, that Harold
with his purple crayon, first
marked out.

Dec 6th

To unloose a double bind one needs to ever so slightly release pressure on both ends, which requires a slit to be opened, that is a purchase that becomes scar.

Death, Ma says, also unties the flower (I didn't transcribe fast enough). Put that in your book of tricks. And turns back to the basket for another sheet to hang on the under sky.

Easy for her to say.

Cat-a-mouse, pat on the heart, keep that safe.
Folds her hand flicker-loom
or butterfly-skim over my sister's
in dim-watt 8 mm flottsom Dad

stored back in the recess of the
garage, games & unopened from
last move marked "dining room"
like "Toys 'r' us" or Lowes'

invasion plan supplies,
and what we enter and take and return
from under nests,

under scaffold depot X-Mass accumulate
we were still hup-two at the back of
our minds her sad caved in.

Dec 7th:

I put Helen Carr's *Revolution in Verse* aside. Try to think Mom in the window, a memory memorial, to make what the Chinese perhaps call metal — a pause, pond, otherwise disc fallen to palm arrowing back from the deep summer depart to once more make ground Michael fertile St. Joan will pull forth as sword grief thing.

Swift elemental changes of thought to breathe to life, to fire, something of ember.

“The soul doesn't miss me,” she says.

She fingers her trace beads between image and
fetish stone, rubal, amythestation, onxity
and lapisticity, maid marriage at dawn of
dusk orange, dew drake, spattered

menstrual blood at month's mark you
could seduce from its beckon, your tongue
aflutter calls asuction, asundered blossom,
broke its free ship from impasto'd hour,

background as leavings or "bare life"
as harm meant herm *because we are*
not common — she

said a reduction Mary over, set a boil, "the visit
of a God is not my *stèle*; I'd rather all sister
stones//pushed tooth a dragon from the soil

to leave my mark." That day.

Dec 8th:

It cannot quite be as I recall. A bed in the cowboy wallpaper gable room was soul and in a room next door (actually a cedar closet Mom kept her red fox fur in & mothballs, the best hiding place even with the door open, the shadows so deep back). Aunt Ruth (mom's sister) is yelling at my cousin he has the Beatles on a Sony Transistor Radio and turn it off; I could get Detroit across the Lake, but this is strange and likely confused with Denver or me listening and cedar and "I want to hold your hand" when I preferred Motown, Petula Clark but not Aretha's "Chain, chain, chain" I don't know why; was it 1964 or 65? Black haired Mom did her Jackie imitatio didn't listen to music, her Dad's plastic black radio dialed to Indians' baseball while she's doing clothes in the basement I used to curl on the floor and listen.

Several black haired gals folded kohl 1920
along a newspaper fold//crows become
threaded t'shaws and back again//spread wings and
step step across floorboards left

domestic or otherwise interior and mirrors
to change back to daughter or to hero prince, double
in Jean d'Arc bob cut & by the
1940's sunglasses to swan and place city

in perspective; by then adjusted to pose and
yet falcon or dive//neither you nor we
accepted as material fact//you can

climb into walls you have to,
into other lands inside walls//this girl
body they say has kids.

Dec 9th:

These memories cannot be her house nor mine though
leaked as purple in brushstroke I watch with a second
eye the double (sometimes a brother bear) that is
stereoscopic twin or sister to pavement, winter pines,
camellias and the pair of cardinals, red and red to green
on my roof; in this way I am landscape and sky here
between the face of my life I can never see and the
clouds blown off in sails lets me be more than girl.

How did we separate, Ma? That we were, in your eyes
and mine, one character or the other?

“I can call the wind, David” my Maxfield
Parish mother, when she learned to sail,
sails across the kettle pond her small
boat//green-black water I could not see

my face//in the boat I thought “sure”
trailed my hand, wrist still bandaged where
I’d tried to make a cut to stop the June
stars//the vast departures of angels

startled like birds by blossoms and leaves—
of course some remain, friend, bend sudden mist
to share your tears and

visit at tea; the grass and oak and maple
loved my Dad a rosey in his slumbering garden pants,
why not my mother also, young witch a breeze

would shelter?

Dec 10th:

A turbulent night, I wake up three times in a startle, struggling, The first time I am hiding in a room that is for sleep, it's a hide and seek game and someone comes in to the room and around the end of the bed—I wake up startled grabbing at them & there is a white figure of diffused light in the room, maybe a foggy eyed understanding of a streetlight reflection off the glass of the Chagall roses & then I startle again two more times when I am cornered, to fight my way out of a situation.

The tremendously disruptive nature of Mom's anger a projective force in gusts that disturbed sleep—Sam felt it as well when he visited—perhaps a vibration set up between Bruce and Mom, what is called faery to say fury when required to admit earth and restless of sex, the dolls in the house like a series of wicks to focus and manage in plastic stillness movements that otherwise flicker, and we'd all have to see, brood fetish as rheostats, a bank of them pushed up against the outside ocean.

House irradiate by dream among
silent neighborwalls in uneven time
made starling and call by book;
at night, pages open further

unfurl edges where time folds &
she touches you from Minsk, whispers
or gale siren, the most recent
smolder aurora,

pulse like hearts without heat
what sense undone lingers
where the road passes —

each bed at the edge
rocked a bit in wake
we almost open after.

Dec 11th:

Slurry Saturday w/grey leak sky. Read *Verse Revolutionaries* up to the catastrophe of the war.

Irene's therapist in downtown Andover, the ridge up from the railroad and Shawsheen River, a high road and cemeteries, and now stores. She never spoke too much about sadness or what built up as bitter as, as I cannot say this anger I carry wound and doesn't disperse as, this bind I circle. Start with rum then, hid after I teenage found it supposed locked in a pink cabinet stood in the basement on saw horses and easy to unhinge, six screws I could get at. Rum or whiskey, just at night, "what I want so as to sleep, since I've decided not to use my body as dam or circuit, since I cannot trust its feels, and nothing halts the horse wind of thoughts gallop and circle — not breath, my body obedient and still unhinged." She'd say, pointing at her heart, "I don't like my body, David."

His curdling wave wand, his I am
not a girl or mothered hard,
takes Victoria figurehead
for theft out the back door deal —

“It’s her fault all dem commies and most
willing to sacrifice you Prosperity;
she’s feast and famine wheeled out of Troy
and pushed into the ocean, huh?

& oil dads and coal dads and railroad dads
feed her small seeds so she’s rural and sheaf
& you cannot trust on this”

the boys say, “the one hand, we’ll put it in
safe folds of metal
you eat to spend her wrists.

Dec 12th:

Mercury gone retrograde and errands pile up, start to go astray — it rains.

A certain amount of walking things from here to there mothers, but not girls at the time it becomes clear story would be an unreliable resource for imagining what it mean to be a person, and yet childbirth is still how we out of our mother's bodies arrive to dream, to paint a story about a girl, reading at a window as the constant make-too-bright yammer of testosterone makes a cross, and don't believe it when they talk about masculine hardness, the penis is so soft and hidden away & bird to find.

In any case, she had plans for me in yellow, because blue and green had already been assigned. Gave me yellow toothbrushes and shirts, as index to where I was sorted. Bruce, blue. Ed, green. Saturn earth, David, what's not the sky or life.

Love ma a pence, a tell
an thought yellow as my bucket
to wash and shush her harmony
so bright always, her mind matter her

Pythagorean tracery. She thus thinks
me angel-like, honor or drinking cup's canary
plastic, that duty knighted
I was not about. They say

“Paint a room yellow where you
do numbers of calculate ration.” She
gave me to philosophers, she say,

“He's the yellow one, lady lion
cowardly third big Burt Lahr boy
to think Heidegger's stun.”

Dec 13th:

First quarter moon is crucible this morning.; air still warm but clear from rain, as if emerged in a second world, sun and moon separate and sad or tossed, at the abrupt application of a face or mask.

A battered copy of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* up on the top shelf of the bookshelf — Mom said it was racy the way she later talked about Bill T. Jones or Vigo Mortisson, she was not forbidden but it was up high, and I didn't read it did I? Not when I was reading the rest of Lawrence on the breezeway day bed or atop my bunk bed that looked a long way south to Boston over that landscape of cranberry pocks and blood we wasped over, fierce and vigilant, as already our hearts were utterly blood wolf and stone we hid in that barn — *Women in Love*, I suppose. There's a book that says Lady Chatterly was H.D. or part composite, and despite Lawrence's penis pointed sun in all directions, there was a sense a girl's freedom, her absolute to go where, her uncertain how, was like slaves, a thought we'd been brought to bear on, Troubadours, since.

All this: I am fascinated by your neck's
curve, doesn't it ma? I am still in love despite
all shame I have this desire to break,
a young kid'll stab his eye to see

or try to stop. It's Fire! It's Fire! Birds
shriek dove over exposed rock of
body that's impossible storm and
so proper restrained. Some-other

than circuit's fuse, some-other than
arc or juxtapose, some not
synthesis — o, each of us

fell feel as well, then turn
to see it, — and we're suddenly
to the second story.

Dec 14th:

What is ordinary? *Ordens* — inflected marrow air, mallow seed, thigh straight of brink or brick. We are here, among ours, call it history or what strains to become visibly light.

At the Hickman's in Beaver Falls, PA, bottom vined & not later when they lived in Erie & Mary had died, and the garage w/tar roof, it's soft in the sun. But earlier and younger in the night, out to the bathroom, my yellow cup unpacked and lined up along the blue and green, slight flare at the lip so tulip, plastic sparkled. There in a transition house. In danger & needs quiet & suspended spider could fall if not put back precise and self aware, the minister's wife might wake.

Absence that seeps through since
we are not made of light, ma,
anymore than yellow
intellect requires &

is neither end nor endless otherwise
called flesh // you might have said, "*loin
et proche*," the flutter of the
crocus throat to

stammer awn
awed the red sky
assigned to no one —

metal door of the milk chute
snapped shut and other
obvious charms.

Dec 15th:

Sky's blue and a budge warmer so a storm through tonight'll most likely rain or pass slush and wash. The day spent struggling with the old "lack of visibility" motif, and Candy suggests brighter shirts and none of them blue. I ask Maggie about if I could teach in drag, but that'd be off too, because everything still gets read.

The Lindbergh kidnapping Mom followed in New York newspapers folded somehow in my head with the Dionne Quintuplets and a gothic gabled house up at the top of our street near the postbox — I'd walk with Mom up there to mail letters she wrote in perfect small clenched cursive, three or four a week to her mother in Denver. Seven girls lived in the house, all orphans, and all with the same Dionne Quint black bob cut Mom later wore and Jehanne D'Arc too. And all disabled, the one my age couldn't make tears and when in 4th Grade Mr. Radabaugh yelled so sharp at her about spelling, she had to use an eye dropper to put tears in to cry; her older sister Yvonne (a name in "Y" Iseult) was in my brother Ed's grade and already elegant thin and long w/polio brace, and so, all of these in a row, in front of the house, black bob disabled, and Mom with her bottle-thick glasses and girlhood crossed eye and "stigmatism" like Christ and cross, saw world in painful cubist collisions of planar glass and would lie in bed in the dark with headaches. A whole long row of orphan and the Lindbergh blonde Apollo boy torn away, and Mom'd worry ever since read newspapers

enlarged by glasses about strange men strange men
who looked in windows strange and shadowy. Her
worst what men were.

What Yeats called “dark leopards
of the moon” is half *life*, stain and brood,
shadow boys and girls spectacle, desire
uneasy dappled skin & honest as cloak

covers that bedroom adrift bed where
colors’ chalice was tented quilt and skin,
eye’s spangled, parchment for
Bali puppets — the way blood runs

& men do ceaselessly. Terrible command
from the ancestral river in step
with spring’s return & not

cancelled by violets we bear
in solemn and disobedient
festal.

Dec 16th:

Mom is yelling at Bruce. We are driving through Rocky Creek Park. There were, I believe, several ways to drive through the park. Many of them involved all of the children being silent and Mom and Dad “talking” or everyone being silent for twenty minutes. Climbing out of the park, the slopes rose sharply and the road dropped or wound up hill Dad would shift into second to take a turn. In a broad glen some of the roads led to there was a submarine jungle gym. We’d play Sundays or NASA picnics. There was sun and one long glorious Red Rover game now long ago. Sometimes the creek was flooded and the little bridges at the bottom of the gorge would be closed off and Dad would drive through maybe a foot of water anyway. In general, church was on the other end of these drives, so we were often in Sunday clothes and unhappy, and on the way back we’d have to be quiet because Mom wanted to talk about the sermon, to keen her Schiller argues. After lunch (canned pears on beds of lettuce) we’d have to be quiet because Mom and Dad would “take a nap.”

“If there were witchcraft, I’d make three wishes,”
Mom’d sing, summer camp memory, and
like the Buddhist *Pure Land Sutra*, where
a bodhisattva makes a vow he wouldn’t become a

Buddha unless anyone who thought of him would
be reborn in his pure land & now he’s the Buddha
Amitabha

and so the vow is true, it was of course
obvious there was witchcraft, Mom being a

witch, so the three wishes she’d sing about
were one’s she’d made, the beckoning golden road
and the campfire that called her home

and the one I can’t remember,
she’d got them, the ironing board piled with
underwear and Dad’s shirts.

Dec 17th:

Such conflict endured from years produces as its after-touch an arm of a cross of light, naturally mistaken as self, which is only, turned that way, weight. The shadows of sunset in the backyard on garage cinder blocks.

Mom'd open the side door and send us outside into the yards, a small crowd of kids spilled out of houses, but often alone, since everyone would go off. When it was just my younger sisters I would do animal charades against the swing-set what would later be an animal-guessing card game with my son — to imagine being serpent or basilisk, girl-fish slunk in the pools of Volga tributaries and melt ponds whose white fungal hair would twine around a swimming ankle — dreams of shape-shifting where all is bent blues to be possible, bent poles and an African swamp. Later I would hide these skills in my sleep, or that boy would come out when I kept writing “constent” no matter how many times I looked up the spelling in the dictionary. He would not leave me alone, even though the other children were lining up to climb up into the light.

Sugarplum faeries on the bookshelf, binding
dust green // picture leaf-glued to the cover
hermaphrodite at the edge of Olson's field // o
quick-step down the book-opened corridors

the visitor's spell nestles above tea // steam on the table
as proof // I am here among auguries. Always the pair,
narrative and window, outside and sear, the glass frank
as gift; broken goblets but now stretched up between

spired and herald she calls crown
droops its curl and looks askance make
yarrow // cut the stalks

to clear the field of portance:
so younger sister would rise
into the darkening.

Dec 18th:

Actually the 19th, late after a party at Maggie's. Tonight it's that thinking about Mom's details among different academic women leads me to imagine the hard jolt she felt to find herself married and in TN among scientists — she never talked about who she imagined she suddenly was in that society that was distributed among new quick-built houses in shingle row, and before this a Columbia grad among other students or just angled reading Schiller a few yards from where Ginsberg walked past (1947) and St. John's Cathedral outside the campus but interrupting the flow of the city streets with its bulk anyway, so that you couldn't go East from there to southern Harlem but were turned somehow aside and west towards the Hudson.

We are not talking yet, Ma, and I imagine
you in circumstances of your time and suppose
the bookshelf in the living room is the place
to begin, built around the mantel, I'd pull

books from to lay under Dad's chair — I guess
Dad bought that house you didn't see it
& were in bed with Barbara and the flu
which doesn't sound too bad, almost cosset,

but I get scared every time I think what
I am feeling is obvious, "I am sexual
attracted to you" or "I'd like to dance,"

I sometimes see as a cascade of changed
emotion cross someone's face or how different
a person is, one time to the next.

Dec 19th:

Moon moves towards full & eclipse at its south node, climbs up over the end of the tilt, solstice to happen no matter what.

Same as: Five kids in seven years instead of grad school at her Saturn return, which meant a shift from theory to practice, taking up the aesthetic education of morals among small squalling she didn't know to swaddle, our *spieltrieb* involved in mumblety peg careful flip and drop and more chaotic enthusiasms she was breathless in the wake of. More play in that wheel than she could figure to adjust and at the same time steer in some general direction of culture. Instead "go outside to play" she'd stand at the side door and give us to dandelions and brain blood barriers, then go back in further to her bedroom, pull out something she was sewing, and worry at to release a thread. Some slow change that theory had said could be fast.

Letters to her mother three times a week
as a kind of asking count — she'd been
broken eyed & Cordelia against
her sister-father and mother-sister — the

way that sisters make the world in twos
and second sisters take the other
path that's left, it's leaving stones, her
Mom in Denver with her older

sister Ruth — Who cuts the room
by meanness spat or stronger pull,
who dreams or has the red,

who has the blue? Makes a quiet, smart
adventure girl more quiet until thrasher thin
she wades into what's ever deeper.

Dec 20th:

I always liked my Mom's sister Ruth, bluff nurse married to an artist who drew for Western Clothing magazines; he'd had TB during the war, the last century's dead in his lungs, in desert chaparral where the stained glass windows were the sky. In Denver there was maybe a different straight-line post-war suburban sequence, driveways and fences, but the same allotment and theory about a fruit tree back near the shed. Ruth had no children — Mom won the eternal sister war there — but adopted two, slightly older than each of my brothers (take that, Irene) & one time we took the Denver Zepher from Chicago; we sat in the domed viewing level above the regular car and watched Nebraska.

Ma's double vision was how diamond hard
light became fractal and being the ugly back behind
bottle slanted glasses / but prescient because cubist
without effort, Dr. Calgari shadows of East Orange streets

out her bedroom window, so modern, so electric wire
in the sky // sisters divide the world though old as beaches,
she's seeing twice and a bit greedy &
her sister'd tell, "Rene wanted that one too, Daddy."

Indian sister could run a mile &
Ma ran off the track, 'fused
by the crab cross-grass design she

was stuck having to think it before saying,
suspended spider in ghost world
of half broken things.

Dec 21st:

I see Mom in hallways that are green of a kind of forest calico-rosette lace; or I see a distraught, angry really, woman wandering her house; she was already a ghost in my mind before she died, some part of her lost there, or cuckoo had come in to occupy and chase away suitors. I'd say I dreamed her this way they say figures in a dream are yourself, so the suggestion is that this is a part of her that I ate, perhaps with breast-milk, like a tracking chip. But that would be treat this visitor as caused by, when it more likely occurs alongside waking life, not matter, but proximate, the way someone will lean in to opine and then sit back against the window, visible not because I wished this, but because there is a fold in the image left over from handling.

Fold stressed one way
means something like
extend your tongue so as to
press open, makes possible love //

but also three paper doll nurses in lingerie
I had as a child; one short black-haired,
especially slim and fold the uniform tabs down

over her shoulder, that year, 1966
Richard Speck killed eight
student-nurses in Chicago is now

confused when later, maybe 30,
I find on late night the Charles Bronson
“10 to Midnight” version of this.

Dec 22nd:

Sam mails off grad school applications, and Sasha poised beside my typing tries to lay her head against my hand. I notice writing about Ma pushes back — my baroque list of folds and double-structures sits against her restless legs, and thoughts I have of her must be like cave paintings, a mask of all future thought.

There is no question children can be erotically focused, perhaps abrupt by trauma. The light I remember glinted off Susan Fitzgibbons' hair I followed her down a side-street home, and then went on down her street to cut through the park I wasn't supposed to, and on the far side I hide in the grass a sec to see if anyone was out to see me leave the shadows & ran quick across the road. A velvet covered black pony on a Valentine absolutely fetish the same way later a slim turn of a leg, and all this no matter what horror elsewhere *Chinatown* is pending and I shout out "No" as the car drives away and the gun goes off. I am indeed captivate in the most obvious masculine attention that runs through my dreams & Mom's worries about Dr. Sax gone ripper, flits by her window to peer each night is laid down like a tarot card next to the first, I now have to think through.

Difficult body made silent so it can't
say & no one may listen as mica and crystals
slowly pebble up from the
impression we live among —

outcrops and runnels like us as
all things shape in scars. But never still quiet
never that silence stops, that
rhythm all music carries

without a voice. What silence says
anyway, what we press against
makes its dented glove

across lips, brushes cheekbone
of wings of alter we
are changed by.

Dec 23rd:

I dream of an empty house, Edwin Avenue perhaps, at least the yard where I too planted fruit trees, though sometimes also a second floor apartment breezeway. Someone suggests I go to the hills of Western MA, one of my dream gardens. I wake into the day as if I'd put my head into a stream, a flow of thoughts about Mom and Dad, how obsessive he was we now wonder Asperger's, and so from a controlling Dad who'd lost his faith to obsessive compulsive husband was as far as she got — we are stuck repeating, meet second versions of those we first disappoint or are betrayed by, have only a few decades, a few chances. A first throw and then we do the best we can.

Mom so wanted to be fair & her sister and she fought, and Dad & his brother, and her Dad & his brothers, so she thought, "I'll be fair. No child will get more or less," and Dad's Navy upbringing so similarly oriented to rations he was willing too, willing to order cans in the basement and the regimes of identical breakfast and identifying colors to sort whose toothbrush was whose — all perfectly ACLU rational, but it leaked out right away — totem animals and colors are not fair or equal, they are different.

Maybe Mom was greedy or imperial smart soul and smacked down as a girl and then having to make die with the bad part of wife-mother (I meant "make *due*") as a possible next step among bad refugees, and then suddenly it was 1965, and somewhere south of

Cleveland, the Velvet Underground were playing (she hadn't seen that coming) and five kids going divergent into separate plans for what was so quickly happening since Mom and Dad certainly had no clue, though the ritual work, hanging up the clothes on the sere sky clothesline and the snap of sheets before a June storm, was a way of holding a finger on the page.

And then it was the 1970s and what to do with that, walking around Lawrence in poor once mill-town to take the census, her scarf still trying to keep up with Schiller's duty, but her kids gone so far from calculations what could anyone do but pray?

After we viewed Ma's body // claustrophobic morgue entry-room,
thanked folks who kept us from her as per regulations, "We can't
leave you alone in the room," Ed and I drove up the sunset
coast of Lake Cayuga to Taughannock Falls she'd ask us to drive her

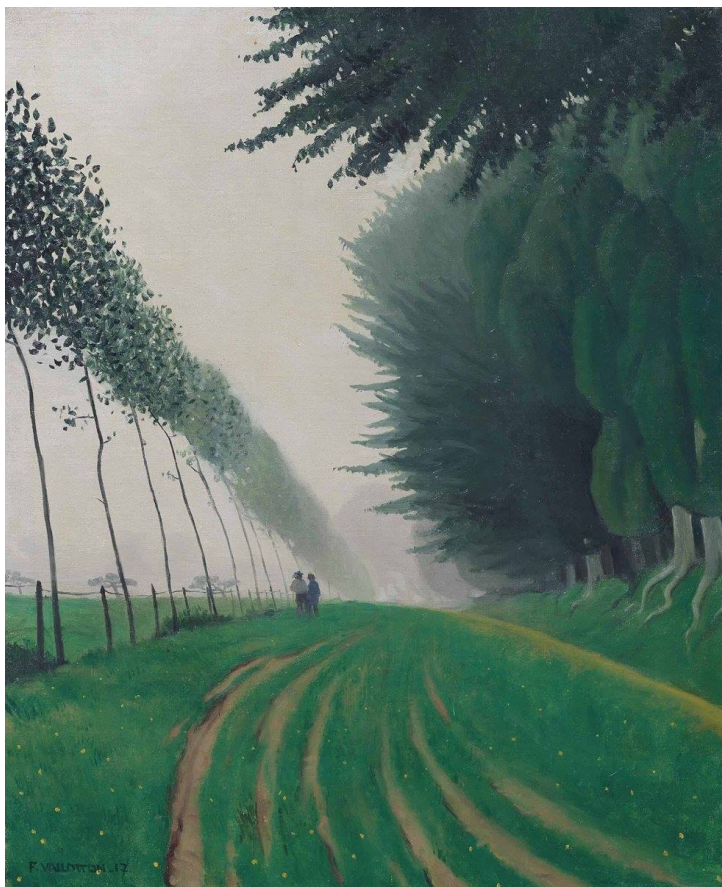
there to sit at the overview quarry gap, maybe five-hundred yards
across
to the ribbon streamed drop from field level up there to lake
underfoot.

Ed talked about having joined AA, and I pressed him about whether
he was okay with conceit of a Higher Being / I don't mind saying
God

I said // we walked down the WPA steps
and leaned out over & after a bit a school group came
running down both steps, yells echoing off

the grotto walls, the way kid's voices do in the day, and one kid
leans so far out, too far, and girls taking it in in clusters, and Ed said
"Okay,
life goes on," and I said she would like this, the kids

and what had just started.



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A Necessary Distance: Statement from the Artist:

Many words are spoken about forgiveness but how do we live it? I have devoted a greater portion of the past three years trying to figure out the answer to this question. I have come to realize that there comes a point when one can forgive someone his/her lies and betrayals and the pain caused, but at the same time, accept that for a little while, he/she needs not be in one's life. This series is my way of processing what has occurred in my own private life and these thoughts about forgiveness. My visualization of the idea that I have come to accept, that sometimes what is needed is simply a necessary distance, to allow for life to move on, to allow a space for the heart to heal, and then maybe, one day, I will meet him again and be able to truly say, "Hello my friend, how have you been?"



CONTRIBUTORS

ANA BOŽIČEVIĆ is a poet, translator, teacher, and occasional singer. She grew up in Croatia and now lives in Brooklyn. She is the author of *Joy of Missing Out* (Birds, LLC, 2017), the Lambda Award-winning *Rise in the Fall* (Birds, LLC, 2013) and other big and small collections of poems. New poems in *Prelude*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Poezija*, etcetera.

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LAYNIE BROWN's recent books include: *In Garments Worn by Lindens*, *Periodic Companions*, and *The Book of Moments*. Her honors include a Pew Fellowship, the National Poetry Series Award, and the Contemporary Poetry Series. She teaches at University of Pennsylvania and at Swarthmore College.

LAURA CARTER lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where she grew up. She has published several chapbooks and many poems in journals in print and on the web. She teaches college English and humanities courses online and drives Uber.

A lover of poetry and storybooks from a young age, GAIL GOERS took her first photography class in her late-twenties and fell into immediate and irreparable love with the medium. Whether she is using a 4x5 view camera or a toy camera, the hint of a story hiding along the edge is almost always present in her images. She uses the camera as an instrument for exploring these stories hidden among the cities and landscapes she passes through. In 2016, she graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with an M.F.A. in Photography. Currently residing in Taipei, Taiwan, her interest has now shifted back to writing, leading to the series of ok cupid poems, inspired by her own experiences with online dating in a foreign culture. An experience that echoes the distance and disconnect, the feeling of remove, that becomes a companion when living abroad, far away from the known and one's community of family and friends. More of her work can be seen on her website: www.gailgoers.com

MARY JANE GORE lives and works in Virginia. In addition to journalism, she has published work in Hospital Drive and Washington Review of the Arts and has had honorable mentions for short stories in the C-Ville contest. This publication is the first appearance of her longer fiction.

Enfant, JULY GIGUÈRE a vécu au Canada, aux États-Unis et au Mexique, dans un Winnebago. Elle habite aujourd'hui Montréal, mais son cœur reste fidèle à l'Estrie, où elle a passé les dix-neuf dernières années, partageant son temps entre l'enseignement de la littérature et l'écriture. Détentrice d'un doctorat en création littéraire de l'Université de Sherbrooke, elle a contribué à la fondation de la revue *Jet d'encre*, participé à de nombreuses lectures publiques et fait paraître des textes sur la plateforme *Opuscules* et dans les pages d'*Exit*, d'*Art le Sabord*, de *Jet d'encre* et des *Cahiers littéraires Contre-jour*. Son roman *Et nous ne parlerons plus d'hier* (Leméac) a été finaliste au prix Ringuet et son recueil de poésie *Rouge – presque noire* (l'Hexagone) lui a valu le Grand Prix du livre de la Ville de Sherbrooke.

As a child, JULY GIGUÈRE traveled in Canada, United States and Mexico in a Winnebago. Today, she lives in Montreal, but her heart remains faithful to Estrie, where she spent the last nineteen years, sharing her time between teaching literature and writing. She holds a doctorate in creative writing from University of Sherbrooke. She contributed to the foundation of the magazine *Jet d'encre*, participated in many public readings and published texts on the platform *Opuscules* and in the pages of *Exit*, *Art le Sabord*, *Jet d'encre* and *Cahiers littéraires Contre-jour*. Her novel *Et nous ne parlerons plus d'hier* (Leméac) was finalist at the Ringuet prize and her collection of poetry *Rouge – presque noire* (l'Hexagone) earned the Grand Prix du livre of the City of Sherbrooke.

RUTH LEPSON is poet-in-residence at the New England Conservatory in Boston. Her books are *Dreaming in Color*, *Morphology*, *I Went Looking for You*, and *Ask Anyone*, and she's putting together a new & selected poems. She edited *Poetry from Sojourner: A Feminist Anthology*. At her website, ruthlepson.com, you can hear musical settings of poems from *Ask Anyone*.

CORY MASSARO, Ohio born, is currently/transitorily living in Zurich. He has written on oral epic and on the intersection of phonology and poetics in Sanskrit and Greek literature.

I was a fish thing
the river shepherded upstream by saying,
"Down, trout, you low-lake layman";

I was a duckling
of which the feet were broader than the farm
whose fields hatched tamped with waddles;

now I am water-
falls bottled at the source. I hate all boats.
I foam from within plastic and they capsize.

When DAVID NEED is awake he lives and teaches in Durham NC. He has published two volumes of Rilke translations and essays (*Roses: The Late French Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, Horse & Buggy 2013, and *Notebooks and Personal Papers*, Shearsman 2018) and one volume of his own poetry, *Offshore St. Mark/Songs In-Between the Day: Two Suites* (Three Count Pour 2015). His poems and essays have appeared in *Hambone* and *Talisman*. He's written on Rilke, Alice Notley, H.D., Kerouac, Fanny Howe and Nathaniel Tarn among others.

PATRICK PRITCHETT's most recent book of poems, *Orphic Noise*, appeared in 2017 from Dos Madres Press. His latest scholarly publication, on Gustaf Sobin and Ezra Pound, appeared in *Journal of Foreign Language and Culture*. He has taught at Harvard, Amherst College, and Hunan Normal University.

JACKSAN SAFFORD is a pseudonym.

NAT SCHMELING has lived in the same blue house in Gages Lake, IL their whole life, using poetry as a way of grounding difficult emotions into something more tangible. Nat is a recent college graduate who is slowly learning to accept that grey area of uncertainty about the future. Nat spends their free time with their recently adopted rescue pigeon, volunteering at local animal shelters, reading old YA novels aloud, and watching black & white movies.

MARK SCROGGINS has published four books of poetry: *Anarchy* (2003), *Torture Garden: Naked City Pastorelles* (2011), *Red Arcadia* (2012), and *Pressure Dressing* (2018). His most recent prose book is *The Mathematical sublime: Writing about Poetry* (2016).

SCOTT C. SMITH grew up in Boise, Idaho, went to Wesleyan and Berkeley, studied Zen with Norman Fischer, and has worked in journalism, teaching and software. He has lived in Los Angeles since 1993, and began experimenting with poetry again about five years ago. He loves maps, petroglyphs and Mesoamerican mythology.

AARON VANSTEINBERG, a Kansas native, graduated from Duke University in May 2019 with a B.A. in English. His suite, “Arrivals,” received the English Department’s 2019 Anne Flexner Memorial Award for Poetry. He will be applying to graduate literature programs in the fall.

